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A

# SERIES OF LETTERS

ON IMPORTANT

DOCTRINAL AND PRACTICAL SUBJECTS,

ADDRESSED TO

*Lark*  
REV. SAMUEL C. AIKIN,

Pastor of the First Presbyterian Church, in Utica, N. Y.

TO WHICH ARE ANNEXED

A BIBLE CREED AND SIX LETTERS

*much*  
TO REV. D. C. LANSING, D. D.,

Late Pastor of the Second Presbyterian Church, in said City,

ON THE SUBJECT OF

A COURSE OF LECTURES

DELIVERED BY HIM

AGAINST UNIVERSALISM,

IN THE WINTER OF 1830.

---

BY DOLPHUS SKINNER,

Pastor of the First Universalist Church and Society in Utica.

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"Wherefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith; not giving heed to Jewish fables and commandments of men that turn from the truth."  
*St. Paul.*

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SECOND EDITION.

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## PREFACE.

IN presenting the second edition of these letters to the public, it becomes necessary for the author to state the circumstances under which they were first written and published, and the reasons that have induced their republication in the present form.

The letters to Rev. Mr. Aikin were commenced in the Spring of 1829, finished in the Autumn of 1832, and published along the intermediate time as they were written, in the third volume (first series) of the "Evangelical Magazine" and the three first volumes (new series) of the "Evangelical Magazine and Gospel Advocate." They were commenced under a deep sense of the importance of the subjects to be discussed—for none can be of greater moment to man than these—and the necessity and advantages to the cause of truth, of a free and full investigation of the popular doctrines of the day, with the firm conviction that when truth and error grapple with each other, having "an open field and fair play," the latter must quail beneath the power of the former, and he who yields to the power of truth, though vanquished, is nevertheless the fortunate man. There appeared also a necessity for some work of the kind, that should take up in order, and systematically discuss, the leading doctrines of the Presbyterian church, and their tendency, and present them in their true light, in contrast with those doctrines and principles held by the denomination to which the writer belongs, in a manner which is not usually done in the fugitive and miscellaneous articles that commonly appear in our weekly, or periodical publications. It has been the writer's aim thoroughly but candidly to pass in review all the peculiar and distinguishing doctrines of Presbyterianism; to refute, both by Scripture and reason, whatever appeared therein untrue, incompatible with the character of the Deity, or of bad moral tendency in society; and to establish, in lieu thereof, a system reflecting the highest possible honor on the character of the former, and exerting the most salutary tendency on the lives and happiness of the latter. How far he has succeeded in this aim, the reader must judge.

He regrets that this labor had not been performed by an abler hand, or that, falling to his own, he had not possessed leisure and opportunity for more critical research during the time the letters were in progress; and that the cares of a family, the duties of his ministry, his parochial avocations, and editorial and publishing labors, allowed him only opportunity of seizing now and then a leisure moment to pursue his design.

The writer did flatter himself, from the great importance of the doctrines discussed, from the place and station occupied by Mr. Aikin, and from the solemn appeal and earnest call made upon him for a reply, that, at least, some *attempt* to answer the letters would be made by the latter, or some of his brethren of kindred faith. He hoped for this, if it were for no other reason than that the weakness of error might be made to appear from the impossibility of its defence. But no such attempt has been made; nor is it now probable there ever will be. Mr. Aikin, so far as the public and these letters are concerned, remains silent as the house of death.

It is true that Madam *Rumor* says—and she is *not always* mistaken in her report—that the question was gravely debated by Mr. Aikin and the officers of his church, with some ministering brethren, in secret conclave, whether it would be best, or most *politic*, to remain silent on the subject, or attempt answering the letters; and that, by unanimous concurrence, it was concluded that silence was by far the *safest* course for Mr. Aikin to pursue—that the moment he should attempt a reply, public attention would be called more generally to the subject, the letters would be read by many who otherwise might never see them, consequently, many more might embrace the doctrine of Universalism, and Presbyterians would be the losers instead of the gainers, by such notoriety—therefore, the least said, the greater the safety for Mr. Aikin. This, no doubt, was the most sage conclusion for those who choose darkness rather than light, and prefer *popular error* to *unpopular truth*.

In regard to the peculiar *style* of the first *three letters*, I have merely to refer the reader to the *explanation* in letter fourth, for the reasons inducing me to adopt that style, believing that will satisfy every candid and discriminating mind, of the perfect propriety of the course adopted; and asking the reader not to lay aside the book till he has read through *the explanation*—then, if he does not choose to read further, or is afraid of having his faith in modern Orthodoxy, so called, shaken, he had better lay it aside.

The reasons inducing me to publish a second edition of these letters, are, First, A belief that they will be the means of exciting inquiry, and leading many to further investigation. Second, The fact that thousands have read a part of the series, who have never seen, and cannot procure the whole. During the year in which the first twelve letters were published, there were circulated of the Evangelical Magazine (in which they appeared) only about seventeen hundred copies; since which time, and mostly during the progress of these letters, the patronage of the paper has increased to seven thousand: and those who have the last part of the series are anxious to procure the whole. And,



Third, The publication of them in the present form, has been repeatedly and urgently requested and recommended, both by ministering and lay brethren, in whose discriminating judgment I place much more confidence, in this case, than in my own. Such as they are, I commend them to the candid and prayerful perusal of all into whose hands they may fall, with a sincere and devout desire to Almighty God, that they may be instrumental in his hands of overthrowing error, falsehood, infidelity and vice, and promoting the spread of Gospel truth, virtue and happiness among men.

The letters to Dr. Lansing are in a style somewhat different from any and all of those addressed to Mr. Aikin. The difference of character in the two men, will sufficiently account for the difference of manner in which they are respectively addressed. Dr. Lansing removed from Auburn, to this city, in the Fall of 1829, (after the letters to Mr. Aikin were commenced.) Having recently adopted the new school divinity and the system of revivalism pursued by Mr. Finney; full of the fiery zeal and blind infatuation of a lawless fanaticism, and determined to eclipse the glory of all predecessors and rivals in that kind of warfare in which he had engaged, he commenced in January, 1830, a course of lectures, or rather inflammatory harangues, against the doctrine of impartial grace, with all the bitterness and acrimony with which John Calvin pursued Servetus to the stake. A part of these lectures I heard delivered myself, and the rest were faithfully reported to me by those who were present. And feeling it a duty to rebut his slanderous charges, and expose and refute his sophistical arguments against the truth, I addressed him the six letters which are here annexed. They sufficiently explain themselves and the object of the writer, as well as the character of the Doctor, without any further comments upon either, in this place. It is proper to inform the reader, that these letters were none of them ever answered, nor any attempts ever made to answer them, either by Dr. Lansing, or any of his friends. The Doctor's popularity, however, instead of being promoted, very rapidly declined, and after lingering along till last Autumn, he finally took his departure for the city of New-York, where he is now endeavoring to organize a band of kindred spirits with his own.

Many have expressed a strong desire that these letters might be republished in the same volume with the series that precedes them, which course I have concluded to adopt. That they may promote the cause of truth as it is in Jesus, and be a benefit to others, (even though *he* may be beyond the reach of benefit from the labors of man,) is the fervent and sincere prayer of

THE AUTHOR.

*Utica, November, 1833.*



## LETTERS TO REV. S. C. AIKIN, &c.

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### LETTER I.

*Introductory—Humorous expostulations and admonitions.*

DEAR SIR—You will doubtless acknowledge it is the duty of every servant and disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ to do all the good he can in the world, and, whenever he sees any one in a great error, to use his best endeavors to reclaim him from that error, and set him in the right path. I have long considered it my duty to address you on the subject of this letter and those which are to follow: and I assure you, dear Sir, I am not without my hopes of being the humble instrument, in the hand of God, of converting you from the error of your ways, and bringing you to a knowledge of that truth which alone can make free indeed. I acknowledge I have a two-fold motive in this undertaking—it is not only to reclaim *you* from dangerous and pernicious error, but to enlist your services in the cause of truth and righteousness, where, if your eminent learning and distinguished talents were properly employed, you would do incalculable good, in arresting many *other* deluded souls in their wild and fanatical career, and bringing them to the knowledge of God and the practice of virtue.

When I picture in the mind's eye, the mighty contrast between what you now *are*, and what you *might be*, were your talents rightly employed; when I reflect that you are now a principal leader in the cause of bigotry, intolerance and error, with a vast multitude of souls at your heels, who are ready to follow wherever you lead them, to believe implicitly whatever you believe, and to do whatever you bid them; and think of the great good you might

be instrumental of doing, were you to renounce your errors, embrace the truth, and gently lead those many souls into the green pastures of peace, and unto the side of still waters—when I reflect on these things, I say, I do assure you, dear Sir, my heart is filled with the various emotions of pain and pleasure—as the thirsty soul pants for water, even so do I ardently desire and pray for your conversion. I feel the more encouraged to hope for this happy change in you, from the consideration that you are a man of talents and discrimination. That you are both discriminating and talented, every one must acknowledge, after witnessing the adroitness of your management during, and after, the violent raging of the Finney fever in this city, three years ago. For at that time,

“ When civil dudgeon first grew high,  
And men fell out, they knew not why;  
When hard words, jealousies, and fears,  
Set folks together by the ears,  
And made them fight, like mad or drunk,  
For dame Religion as for punk;  
Whose honesty they all durst swear for,  
Tho’ not a man of them knew wherefor :”

at that time, I say, very few, even of your warmest friends, believed you could so manage as to *let down* the people of your charge from that *supernatural elevation* to which they had been *raised*, without their being either “dashed to pieces on the ground,” or falling through, and continued to descend, “down, down, —,” like Milton’s devil when hurled from the battlements of heaven. But to the astonishment of all, you let them down very gently, with the loss of but few souls. You so perfectly understood the nature of the disease, that you managed them with uncommon skill—when the ardor of the fever began to abate, your friendship for Mr. Finney and his measures began to cool, (at least the public expression of it,) and continued to decrease in exact ratio to the subsiding of the excitement; and you very shortly found yourself peaceably occupying your old ground, with a great many more young men and women, or boys and girls, (particularly the latter,) at your command, than you had before. Thus, your success must have been owing to your superior skill in the management of such an affair. For I know not of a single case beside your own, in which any minister has concurred with Mr. Finney in getting up an excitement of this

kind, in which he has not almost, if not entirely, lost his popularity, both with professors and non-professors of religion.

I must, however, caution you, dear Sir, against being vain, or puffed up with pride, at your success in this case: for the same scene will not bear to be reacted in the city of Utica for many years—certainly not during your life time, if ever. As the Grecian king said, after obtaining a slight victory over the Roman General, “another such victory would ruin me,” so you may rest assured that another such an excitement as that to which I allude would ruin you: i. e. unless you should be converted, and embrace the truth, and so lead your flock into a better pasture than they have ever yet fed in. For the time is approaching, yea, it has already arrived, when people will think for themselves, and see through the artful management that has so long been employed to keep them in bondage. A numerous society of believers in the unity, and impartial and universal benevolence of God, is springing up in this place, and daily increasing in numbers and strength. And what is still more encouraging to us, is, that our meetings on Sunday, for public worship, are not only fully attended by respectable people, but even by many of your own society and church; which shows they have a relish for the truth, and would gladly hear the Gospel preached by you, if you only understood it. It also proves, clear as demonstration, that the people generally are arousing from their lethargy to see and embrace the joyful tidings of a world’s salvation, and will no longer receive the dogmas, which you are pleased to call orthodox, as the truth.—These things should admonish you to serious and prayerful reflection, and to “examine your own self, whether you be in the faith.”

As a preparatory measure to your conversion, I advise you to break off all connexion and intercourse with Josiah Bissell, Jr., of Rochester. For he is really, in my opinion, too despicable and scandalous a character for any man of reputation, honor, or standing in society, to have any communion or intercourse with, whatever. True, he *professes* a great deal of piety—so did the *ancient* hypocrites—but I do not believe he possesses *one spark* of vital religion, the religion of Jesus. And I candidly believe his mad career will end in disgrace to himself and all who continue

connected with him. He certainly out-Herods Herod : \* why, Mr. Finney is a fool to him, as to brow-beating, proscriptio, money-begging, stage-running, &c., &c. I do really hope, dear Sir, for the honor of your name, that you have had no hand in encouraging or countenancing, in any shape or manner, the late ebullitions of his spleen and holy wrath against Senator Johnson's Report on Sunday Mails, and those political Editors who have accorded with him in opinion on that subject—in which he scandalously associates Col. Johnson's name with the names of Thomas Paine and Frances Wright, and shamelessly denounces those Editors who approved of the Report as "Infidels, enemies to religion," &c., when it is well known that Senator Johnson is a pious and devoted member of the Baptist communion, and in that Report, conformed strictly to the letter and spirit of the Constitution of the United States. Whether you were one of his counsellors, when he was last in this place, and addressed that scandalous production to the Editor of the "Sentinel and Gazette," that appeared in that paper of the 24th ult., I do not pretend to say—I hope not. For if you were, I should hardly be willing to acknowledge and confide in you as a brother, even after you shall have embraced the truth ; fearing lest the influence of former associates might draw you back again to the beggarly elements of the world.

Whether, with Mr. Bissell, you hold the purse-strings of any of the *nominally benevolent* institutions of this country—branches of the "Bible Society," "Missionary Society," "Tract Society," "American Union for the sanctification of the Sabbath," &c.—I cannot say. I hope you do not : because if you do, I fear that silver will possess

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\* I had designed in this edition to leave out the name of Mr. Bissell, and consequently the whole of this paragraph, on account of the death of that distinguished leader of Finneyism and Pioneerism in Western New-York, which occurred some time since this letter was written. But on farther consideration, and taking advice from my friends on the subject, have concluded to make no alteration, either in this or any other particular. For 1. the picture drawn, I believe is true to the life, as far as it goes. And 2. though probably the equal of this individual lives not now, yet there are many who still aspire at the kind of distinction he sought, and copy after him so far as their abilities allow : therefore the same necessity exists now, as then, for holding up the beacon light to give warning of the danger. Though he is gone, (peace to his ashes,) yet others live in his place.



so great a charm in your eyes, that it will greatly retard, if not entirely prevent, your conversion.

I intended in this letter to have given you some other admonitions, particularly against yielding to the influence of popular names so far as to continue any longer subservient to Doctor Ely's electioneering, and Church-and-State-uniting schemes, or following the example of Doctor Beecher, at the East, who has lately fallen, I fear, no more to rise. But I have already exceeded the limits of what I intended merely as an *introductory* letter, and shall reserve these things for a future number. In the mean time, I assure you, dear Sir, I shall not forget you, but shall pray fervently, night and day, that God, in his infinite mercy, may open the eyes of your understanding, enable you to see the truth as it is in Jesus Christ our Lord, and embrace it to the unspeakable joy of your and my souls.

I am, dear Sir, very respectfully and affectionately,  
Yours in the bonds of the Gospel.

## LETTER II.

*Favorable results of the first Letter—Further admonitions—Doctors Ely and Beecher—American Sunday School Union—Unitarianism and Universalism.*

DEAR SIR—I again resume the delightful duty of addressing you on the all-important subject of your conversion, and would here observe that my hopes of success in this arduous undertaking have been greatly strengthened since I wrote my introductory letter. Indeed, that letter was far more successful than I could rationally have anticipated, under existing circumstances. For it had the effect to make many of your most devoted followers, and some of the leading Finneyites "exceedingly mad:" and *this* you know is with your great prototype, Mr. Finney, a *sure prelude to conversion*; so that I have strong hopes (not of you only, but) of the conversion of the principal and leading members of your church. For who can doubt,



from your brother Finney's extensive acquaintance with human nature, the correctness of his judgment as to the *symptoms of conversion*? or that *he is right*, when he calculates that if he can get people ungovernably wrathful, so that they will say and do things for which they will feel guilt and remorse of conscience, he can then urge successfully the doctrine of total depravity, persuade them that their anger proceeded from the "natural corruptions of their hearts" and their "enmity to God and religion," and thus spread his net over and *convert them*? And now, dear Sir, who can tell but that these same members of your church, who are so angry just before their conversion, will, when they come to *know* and *feel the power* of divine truth in their *hearts*, render me great and incalculable service in my benevolent undertaking, and thus greatly accelerate the conversion of their present much loved pastor? For I cannot believe you will have the hardihood to stand out a great while, or be very stout-hearted against the truth, after all of your principal supporters shall have left their seats in your church for want of the "bread of life," and begin to admonish you to forsake a system as rotten as yours is, which although "it may do to *live* by, will not answer to *die* by."

But really, dear Sir, it is somewhat surprising that your friends should any of them have got so indignant at me, (however much good may result from it,) merely for undertaking to effect your conversion, in the way I have.—For surely nothing unfriendly—nothing but what breathed the most entire good will and benevolence to you—was manifested in my first letter; nor do I intend any thing in this or any future number that shall indicate a want of the most pure and disinterested friendship. Why, my dear Sir, your friends were generally very much *pleased* with your conversion *three years ago*, under Mr. Finney; and why should they be *displeased* with a prospect of a similar event *now*? for surely it must be full as desirable now as then. When you and Dr. Lansing, of Auburn, and several other Orthodox clergymen in this region, after having preached and been settled pastors of churches, ten, fifteen, or twenty years, confessed (as I have been told you did) that you "had never been converted—had never known what true religion was till brother Finney came

along, expounded the way more perfectly unto you, and brought you to feel yourselves, for the first time, the happy subjects of renewing grace," or words to that effect; your warmest friends were well pleased, and said one to another, "then hath God granted to our beloved pastor also repentance unto life." And yet, now, strange as it may seem, those very friends appear to be *afraid* of your being converted a second time! By the way, I would observe, you ought to be very modest in your pretensions, and very diffident of your judgment as to the genuineness of your conversion under Mr. Finney: for if you preached fifteen years, or more, under the deceptive impression that you had been converted to the knowledge of the truth, and afterwards discovered that you had *not*, but had been deceived all this time, you ought not to be very sanguine in the opinion that your last conversion was not likewise spurious. I am as well satisfied that it *was*, and that you need another conversion, as I am that you are pastor of the First Presbyterian church in the city of Utica. And as soon as I can get you to begin to distrust the genuineness of that conversion, I shall think myself in a fair way of soon obtaining my object.

I will now attend to what I promised in my first letter, viz. to give you some advice and admonitions against yielding to the influence of popular names, such as those of Drs. Ely, Beecher and others, in endeavoring to obtain objects beyond your reach, or which, if attained, would be most disastrous in their consequences. Now, friend Aikin, were you really in league with Dr. Ely, in endeavoring to prepare and incite the public mind for the union of Church and State? and were you and he the appointed organs of your party to communicate the scheme to the public, simultaneously, he in Philadelphia, and you in Utica? Your language and his, used on the 4th of July, 1827, are so perfectly synonymous that it would induce the belief, (if you were not above suspicion,) that it was a preconcerted plan between you, to take that time to prepare the public mind for the event above named. You and he both seem to put great confidence in Sunday Schools, as efficient means of accomplishing your purposes. And it must be acknowledged, such is the human mind, that, generally, "just as the twig is bent the tree's inclined;" so that in

this you discovered considerable foresight. You say you "have been surprised to see the apathy of our enlightened statesmen on the subject of Sunday Schools; surprised that they look upon them only as *religious* institutions, when it is so plain that their *political* energy must very soon, if it increases with the same ratio it has for fifteen years past, *totally regenerate our Legislatures and the very halls of Congress.*" You, however, seem rather to rejoice in this apathy, and to exult in the certainty of success in your plans by its existence among enlightened statesmen. (Of course "*enlightened* statesmen" would oppose you.) You say "in such cases it is well that this blind apathy exists, for instead of it, there might have been opposition: but it is *now too late to oppose.*" It has been wisely ordered by divine Providence that this little rivulet should silently flow along until it has acquired the strength and majesty of the ocean." It is not difficult to determine what is meant by the "*regeneration*" of our *Legislatures* and halls of *Congress*, even from your own statements.—But the designs of your party are rendered, if possible, still more indubitable by the Philadelphian Doctor.

Dr. Ely says, "I propose, fellow-citizens, a new sort of union, or if you please, a *Christian party in politics*..... I am free to avow that, other things being equal, I would prefer for my Chief Magistrate, and Judge, and Ruler, a *sound Presbyterian*.....Our Presidents, Secretaries of Government, Senators, Representatives in Congress, Governors of States, Judges, State Legislators, Justices of the Peace, and city Magistrates, are just as much bound as any other persons in the United States, to be *Orthodox in their faith*.....The *Presbyterians* alone could bring *half a million of electors* into the field.....The electors of these five classes (of Orthodox sects named) united in the sole requisition of *apparent* friendship to Christianity in every candidate for office whom they will support, *could govern every public election in our country.* .....It will be objected that my plan of a truly *Christian party in politics*, will make *hypocrites*. We are not answerable for their hypocrisy, if it does." Again he says in an appendix to his report of the American Sunday School Union:—"In ten years, or certainly in twenty, the political power of our country would be in the hands



*of men whose characters have been formed under the influence of Sabbath Schools."*

Thus you and Dr. Ely seem to anticipate glorious times when your "Christian party in politics" shall come into power and "totally regenerate our Legislatures and the very halls of Congress;" when the salutary restraints of an Orthodox Inquisition shall compel all to become "sound Presbyterians" or "hypocrites," and—but I forbear—the picture is too revolting to dwell on. O, for shame, friend Aikin! Can you and the Doctor be so foolish as to think of making all of the intelligent and enlightened people in this country "*sound Presbyterians*"? or even of bringing them *so near it* as to make them all "*hypocrites*"? If you are, I sincerely pity you. But pause a moment, dear Sir, while I ask you, if it is not barely possible that you are deceived and blinded by the love of popularity and the influence of great names? Suppose you should succeed in your undertaking—of which I think there is but very little prospect—but suppose you should, are you certain you would not afterwards repent of it? You have children—suppose after you had succeeded in getting an Inquisition established in this country, with all the appendages of terror and torture that ever characterized that dreadful engine of priestly power in Spain, that you should discover, in your old age, that one of your own children had renounced the barbarous dogmas of your creed, and embraced the mild and benevolent religion of the Gospel, the belief that "God is the Saviour of all men," "good unto all, and his tender mercies over all his works," and in consequence should have to feel the tortures of that dreadful engine—what, I ask, would be your feelings as a father? Would they not be indescribable? Would not the sight, with the reflection that you had been instrumental, however unwittingly, in paving the way for his sufferings, bring down your gray hairs with sorrow to the grave? Such things, Sir, are not impossible, nor, indeed improbable, if you and Dr. Ely should succeed; for I have often known the sons of Orthodox clergymen (and I apprehend the instances will be more frequent hereafter than they have ever yet been) to embrace the truth as it is in Jesus, and come out boldly in vindication of the doctrine of universal salvation.

A few words in reference to Dr. Beecher, to whose case I have before adverted. Though he seems to oppose you and your brothers Finney and Ely in some things, yet the discerning part of community can discover that he is virtually seeking the same object; though he has had art and cunning enough about him, till of late, to keep his designs covered from the generality of the people. While he publicly declaims against the union of Church and State, saying, "let there be no favoritism of the civil power for one denomination of Christians against another, or for one error against another, or for error against the truth, or for truth against error. An open field and fair play is all we ask." Yet this same Dr. Beecher (if the report be true, as I conclude it is, that he wrote the "Review" of Col. Johnson's Report in the Senate on Sunday Mails, which first appeared in the "Spirit of the Pilgrims," and has since been republished in this city) now comes out in the most bitter vituperation against the Senate of the United States for refusing to become sectarian partisans, and uniting with him and his coadjutors, in the *legal* support of (what he calls) "truth against error." Though he would doubtless disclaim this motive, yet I think it too apparent, through the whole of his Review, to be doubted for one moment. In this, as well as other late productions from him, Dr. Beecher discovers that he is not a whit behind the very chiefest of you, in the Church-and-State-uniting project.

In regard to Unitarianism and Universalism, Dr. Beecher has called into requisition his "giant powers," and thought to put them down, *sans ceremonie*; but he has completely failed, and fallen into a pit so deep it is impossible for him to extricate himself without help; and I doubt very much whether he can be helped out. When the Unitarians of Boston charged the doctrine of infant damnation home to its legitimate parent, Calvinism, the Doctor came out in great wrath, denounced them as calumniators, and boldly denied that it is, or ever was, a doctrine of Calvinism. The Unitarians then adduced innumerable testimonies from the writings of Calvin himself, and all his most eminent followers, proving incontestibly that "infant damnation" was an essential and *fundamental* doctrine of Calvinism, and brought home to the Doctor the charge of criminal ignorance or wilful falsehood, so well



sustained, that he is now in such a quandary he hardly knows which end is uppermost. Little more than a year since, the Doctor delivered a course of lectures against Universalism, which he promised publicly should appear from the press: Universalists waited a suitable time with fond expectation of seeing him redeem his promise; but they waited in vain. They have of late repeatedly called for their publication, but he still declines, and is "silent as the house of death" on the subject.—Last Fall Mr. Balfour was present when Dr. Beecher delivered a discourse on "the Rich man and Lazarus," in which he made statements concerning the word rendered *hell* in that passage, of which he was totally and inexcusably ignorant; or else (what is worse) he meant to state what was false. Mr. Balfour called on him for a copy of the sermon, offered him a handsome compensation for it, and Mr. Whittemore offered to publish one thousand copies of it for gratuitous distribution, if he would consent to its publication. But no: he dare not let his ideas and statements be put in print and spread out before the eye of an enlightened public. So that after all his clamor and threats against liberal Christians, the Doctor is himself fairly *down*, and I would here admonish you against falling into his errors, lest you should share his fate.\*

There are some other things in regard to Dr. Beecher, Mr. Nettleton, Mr. Beman, of Troy, Mr. Finney and yourself, that I designed to have noticed, for your benefit, in this letter; but want of time and room compels me to omit them till a future number. In the mean time, dear Sir, I entreat you to think and meditate on what I have said. "Quench not the spirit—Despise not prophesyings." With respect and affection, I am Yours, &c.

P. S.—I shall hereafter satisfactorily explain to you my reasons for adopting the *particular style* that I have in these letters. I would have done it in this, but I apprehend a number of your friends (if not indeed yourself) are "*under conviction*;" and fear it would check the work of grace in their hearts before it should be thoroughly accomplished; knowing that "the wrath of man shall praise" the Lord, "and the remainder of wrath he will restrain."

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\* The Doctor has since left Boston and removed to the West.

### LETTER III.

*Happy omens from first two Letters—Modern revivalists—Messrs. Finney, Beman, Lansing, Nettleton, Beecher, Porter, Edwards, and others—Ludicrous aspect of the two contending parties of Presbyterians at the New-Lebanon Convention.*

DEAR SIR—Every step I take in my labor with you seems to give additional promise of final success, and encourages me to persevere in my undertaking. "To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is profitable." I am informed that you announced from your pulpit, on the Sabbath after my second epistle reached you, that it did "not belong to your creed to make people mad, in order to convert them." This augurs well. I am heartily glad that you have renounced this objectionable part of your creed. Indeed, I did not expect you would renounce the *whole* of it at once. But if you lop off one article after another—and those the most revolting—of your present system, though the work progress but slowly, it will be sure, and your entire conversion inevitable.

To aid you in detecting, and encourage you to reject, other monstrous features in your system of faith and practice, (I mean that adopted by modern *revivalists* of your class generally,) I will now call your attention to what I promised in the closing paragraph of my last letter—to the raging of the Finney fever, the manœuvres practiced by him and his coadjutors, (in which you took so active a part,) being supported in the new measures by Messrs. Beman, Lansing, and others; and the opposition made to your party by Messrs. Nettleton, Beecher, Porter, Edwards and others, when they discovered such a fire kindling as was likely to burn down your house. To describe fully the "hubbub wild and sad confusion all" in which the Presbyterians were involved by those scenes, and from which they have not yet extricated themselves, I shall not attempt: but shall merely glance at some of the principal events, in order to draw from them a suitable

admonition to you to abandon so ridiculous a system of measures and doctrines as your party have adopted.

Mr. Nettleton had long been a celebrated revival preacher—had produced many and great excitements, practiced many extravagant feats, and driven many, through the fear of hell, to *profess* religion, and join the Presbyterian church; and so long as he had art and management enough about him to dupe community, and make people believe his labors were evangelical, and proceeded wholly from his *love of souls*, and not from any *sectarian* and *proselyting* disposition, he was allowed to take the lead, and your denomination very generally approbated his course, and considered him an excellent recruiting officer, even though he might write letters and *sign* them “*Jesus Christ!*”—At length Mr. Finney comes on to the stage—raised from obscurity, and (to say nothing of his private character, or *domestic* affairs, with which I have no concern) as impudent as he was ignorant, he begins to make a great noise, thunders away with his anathemas against all who will not bow and do him reverence, terrifies weak-minded women and children half out of their senses, and from the multitudes that he succeeds in scaring into the church, by his appeals to their *passions*, his descriptions of hell, and his imagery of the infernal regions, (with which he seems to be very familiar,) at once concludes he can out-general Mr. Nettleton; and by the course he pursues, seems to say to the latter, “Brother Nettleton, you’ve been Captain long enough; ’tis my turn now.” Shortly after this, he assumes the office and authority of Brigadier General, and marshals under his command several scores of Aids-de-camp, who, eager to execute the orders and imitate the example of their General, go forth in swarms, like locusts, upon the breadth of the land, threatening to devour every green thing. Among them we see a Nash and a Smith, a Myrick and a Sly, a Boyle and a Snyder, and a whole clan of others of a similar cast, too numerous to name; who in their endeavors to ape Mr. Finney, “remind us (as Mr. Nettleton says in his letter to you) of the seven sons of Sceva who undertook to imitate Paul.” (Acts xix.) I had like to have added to the above named imitators of Mr. Finney, the names of Brs. Aikin, and Beman, and Lansing. But on a second thought, it occurred to me that



they possibly might have been influenced in their course by somewhat different motives. Indeed it appears from Mr. Beman's confession to some of his confidential friends, that *his* motive in adopting the new measures and getting up an excitement in Troy, was, to divert the public attention of the people in that city from the subject of his own domestic broils and private character. Whether the motive of yourself and Mr. Lansing in adopting these measures and getting converted again, was simply to make proselytes to your creed, and additions to your churches, or embraced other objects, I shall not here pretend to determine.

When Mr. Finney and his co-workers and imitators, in this place and Troy, began to make such a tremendous noise, by bringing into the field their heaviest artillery, and to raise such volumes of smoke as wholly to obscure the mental horizon—when the people in this place, filled with consternation at the incessant firing that was kept up, forsook their domestic duties and daily avocations and ran like madmen through the streets, holding prayer meetings from shop to shop, and even in the midst of the streets, and insulting every civil man, woman and child they met—Mr. Nettleton and Dr. Beecher, hearing what wonderful things were done by Mr. Finney and Mr. Aikin and Mr. Beman, found themselves fairly outdone and placed on the back ground. This they could not easily brook. And indeed it could hardly be expected that they would readily yield the palm to younger men than themselves, when they had always been foremost in revival scenes, in getting up and managing great popular excitements. Something must be done, and that immediately, or Mr. Finney and his revivals would soon eclipse all the glory of their own brilliant career. Accordingly Mr. Nettleton sits down and writes a long letter to yourself; and Dr. Beecher, another to Mr. Beman, complaining in the bitterest terms of the abuses and arts practised by Mr. Finney and his coadjutors, in the revivals just got up, calling them “powerful and successful assaults of satan,” spreading “universal misrule and moral desolation” through the land, “fires that would ruin fences and gardens and houses, and burn up friends;” &c., stating that “somebody must speak” out against them, “for silence would prove their ruin.” These

letters, together with the confidential correspondence between Dr. Beecher and Mr. Nettleton, soon creep into the public prints, and produce a general confusion throughout all your ranks. Two great parties are formed—one accuses the other of being “enthusiasts, disorganizers, deranged and mad ;” and they in their turn retort the accusation against their accusers, of being “cold, stupid, dead, unconverted, and enemies to revivals,” and thus mutual accusations and recriminations go the rounds. Till at length, no other way appearing, to allay the increasing fury of the storm, a Convention, or ecclesiastical Council, of both parties, is called together at New-Lebanon. There, face to face, the two contending parties meet, to settle their animosities, restore peace, and determine—not how they should *be governed* by the Holy Spirit—but how *they should govern* the Holy Ghost ! But what a total abortion was here ! and what a ridiculous figure does this Convention make in the records of your ecclesiastical proceedings ! Your party, with their leading officers, Messrs. Finney, Beman and Lansing, introduced their propositions and resolutions, and through the sullen silence and inaction of the Beecher and Nettleton party, were allowed to carry them. Then the other party introduce theirs of entirely opposite import, and through the same silence and inaction on your part, are allowed to carry *their* resolutions ; so that both parties gain the victory, and yet, strange to tell, both parties are defeated ! The resolutions of your party were designed to show that the Beecher party were not actuated by the Holy Spirit in their movements ; and the resolutions of the latter were designed to show that the Finney party were not actuated by the Holy Spirit in their movements. And I must exercise charity enough to believe that *so far* at least, the resolutions of both parties were correct. The two parties not coming to any agreement about *governing*, or *being governed by*, the Holy Spirit, in revival seasons, at length separated more chagrined and disgusted with each other than before. Here the matter could not rest ; for neither party were satisfied. Shortly after this, Dr. Beecher delivered his famous discourse in New-York, entitled, “*Resources of the Adversary and means of their destruction ;*” in which, speaking of *corrupting revivals*, he very kindly intimated that many



of his brethren were instruments of the devil, in getting up and managing revivals as they did.

At length, seeing no end of these contentions, accusations and recriminations, and conceiving the craft in great danger, a few of the "master spirits" meet together in Philadelphia, and after free conversation on the subject of revivals, in relation to those points wherein they differed, they agree to cease from all publications, correspondences, conversations and conduct, designed or calculated to keep *those subjects before the public mind*. Yes, they solemnly obligate themselves to keep those subjects from before the public mind, which, if your views be correct, are of all subjects the most important to be kept constantly in view!

Now, dear Sir, in view of all these things, these strange movements, these popular excitements, these wild fires of Finneyism, these ecclesiastical contentions among the advocates of revivals themselves, and the fruits of them from beginning to end, can you seriously and honestly believe they are all, or indeed any of them, the work of God, the operation of his spirit, or in any way entitled to your longer friendship or countenance? Do they not appear to be wholly the work of crafty, designing men, got up and carried on from interested motives, with a design of increasing the power and influence of the clergy, and christened, "*the work of the Lord*," to make them take with the ignorant and weak-minded, and to add new recruits to your church? What resemblance, what connexion, is there between such ridiculous scenes, and measures, and principles, as are described above, and the labors of the primitive disciples and the principles of the mild and peace-giving religion of Jesus?

Presuming that, if you are not given over to "hardness of heart and blindness of mind," you must be *under conviction* yourself by this time, I recommend to you to exercise yourself much in secret and fervent prayer to God, till I write you again, that he may open the eyes of your understanding, deliver you from the power of darkness, and show you his salvation. In my next I shall give you the explanation promised in the postscript of my second letter.

Affectionately Yours.

## LETTER IV.

*The Explanation—Reasons for adopting the style of the foregoing Letters—Change of style from the humorous to the serious and argumentative.*

DEAR SIR—Having arrived, in the course of my labor with you, to that stage at which it will be both proper and safe to relieve you of that *awful uncertainty*, that, on truly orthodox principles, always accompanies conviction and precedes conversion, I shall now redeem my pledge, and give you the promised *explanation* of my reasons for adopting the particular *style* that I have done in these communications. Doubtless you and your friends, and perhaps some of my own friends, have thought it strange and unaccountable that I should have travelled so far out of my usual path, and adopted a style so uncommon with theological writers generally, and indeed so uncommon with myself, in your case. You may have taken offence, and under the influence of indignant feelings and a misapprehension of my real motives, have attributed it either to enmity against yourself, or a levity of disposition, or an intention to reproach the cause of Christianity, and ridicule religion. But I assure you, dear Sir, my motives have been directly the *reverse* of these things. True, my style has been, thus far, uncommon, even to myself; but the case is likewise sufficiently uncommon to justify it. I have endeavored, as far as possible, to adapt my style to the case in hand. My object has been—

1. *To present you with a mirror in which you might see yourself.* In the style of yourself and those of your peculiar stamp, I have *assumed*—without any effort to prove by argument—that *I am right and you are wrong*; or that *my doctrine is true, and your's false*. You are in the constant habit of *begging the question* at issue between Calvinists and Universalists: And your *arrogant assumption* of the truth of your doctrine, is only equalled by your affected *contempt* of the views of others who may honestly differ from you, and your manner of treating them as the most palpable falsehoods, without giving yourself the trou-

ble of *proving* them such. You speak of and to Universalists as irreligious, unconverted, and indeed, unbelieving people, and talk about their being *converted* to the faith of the Gospel, as though they, while professing to believe in universal salvation, made no pretensions, and had no claim, to the name and character of Christians. And notwithstanding many Calvinists in this place are almost outrageous with me for addressing you as an unbeliever and unconverted, (forgetting that it is in your *own* style,) yet they would, no doubt, approve of the very same thing in you—that is, should *you* undertake to convert *me* from what you deem the error of my ways—and would consider it an evidence of your being a true Christian, filled with the love of souls, and zealously engaged in the work of evangelization. “Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth.” If the mirror I have presented you with, reflects this trait of your character in so clear a light that you have a full and fair view of it, my object, thus far, is accomplished.

2. Although I have adopted your own style, so far as was necessary for the above purpose, yet as my creed (which is founded on the Bible) will not allow me to sentence you to an endless hell, burning with fire and brimstone, for an error in theory or practice, I have supplied the deficiency in that with a little pleasantry. And indeed I was perfectly willing to be relieved from the necessity of adopting that particular trait in your style which consists in damnable sentences. For had I adopted this, I apprehend my communications would, at first view, have appeared so revolting, they would have been read but by few, either of your or my friends. I have occasionally interwoven into my former letters an expression of satirical pleasantry, not only to supply the above deficiency, but

3. To present your movements in conjunction with Mr. Finney and Co., in their *truly* ridiculous light, that you might justly feel ashamed of having espoused so warmly, a system of measures so ludicrous in themselves, and in their details and consequences so destructive to the peace, harmony and good order of society—which have broken through all the ties of friendship and domestic union, outraged humanity, driven timid and weak minds to despair or insanity, and excited the scoffs and sneers of infidels more



effectually than all the writings of Paine, Voltaire, Volney, and the whole catalogue of infidel writers that could be named. It was a subject of some deliberation in my mind whether the course I have adopted were the right course to take with you to induce you to abandon a system of measures so prolific of mischief in society. But I am now satisfied it is the best course that could have been adopted ; though I would gladly have avoided it—as it is not suited either to my taste or talents—and adopted a different one, could I have been persuaded it would prove equally efficacious. But there are certain follies and extravagances in the religious world that men will not be persuaded nor driven from in any other way than that of being *fairly laughed out of them*, or by the application of satire, or irony ; as we find the latter employed by the prophet Elijah, who “mocked” the false prophets of Baal, saying, “Cry aloud for he is a god, either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is in a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth and must be awaked.” Indeed, could serious arguments and solemn appeals to your dispassionate reason have induced you to abandon those extravagant follies, you would long since have yielded to the cool and deliberate judgments of Drs. Porter, Hyde, Emmons, Blachford, and others of your own order, who have raised their voices against them ; and would have abandoned Mr. Finney and his hot-headed subalterns, to reap the fruits of their own folly, till they shall learn that the kingdom of heaven is not to be taken by storm. But instead of that, we find you still striving to keep up appearances, produce feverish excitements, and when a new project is on foot that you dare not put forward *in propria persona* for fear of exciting the enmity of your ablest supporters, you are foisting such men as the “deceived and deceiving” Josiah Bissell, jr. into your desk, to do it for you !

Should you feel disposed to complain of my being too severe upon you, or exaggerating any of my representations of your follies, my reply is, in the language of the queen of Sheba, “The one-half has not been told.” Indeed, I have not attempted to enter into details—I have merely glanced at some of the outlines, or leading features, of the picture. It would be difficult, if not impossible, to run into an extreme in the description of these

things. So far from having *exceeded* the boundaries of truth in reference to the extravagances and follies of yourself, and Messrs. Finney, Beman, Lansing, &c., I have not gone near as far, either in my description of, or severity upon them, as your own brethren have, whose letters are spread out before the public.

Should you ask the reason of my addressing one older than myself in the manner I have, I refer you to my first reason for adopting the style in which my former letters were written, and to the practice of your own class of revival preachers of addressing people respectable in character, venerable with years, and twice as old as themselves, as they would address disobedient and wayward *children*.

Do you ask, who has required this labor at my hands, I being of a different denomination from yourself? I answer, God and my own conscience. *Homo sum, et humani a me nil alienum puto. Nec mihi sed toto genitum me credere mundo.* Aside from all sectarian partialities and party prejudices, I have a sacred regard for Christianity, and would wish to rescue *it* from that contempt and opprobrium that its professed friends are bringing upon it, and *them* from that degradation to which they have stooped. I know my task, for the most part, is at present a thankless one: and although I am satisfied that you will derive much benefit, and your friends and community at large still more, from my labors, yet I expect to incur your enmity and the bitter reproach and invective of your friends. But for this I care but little. *Publicum bonum privato est praeferendum.* I have hitherto lived without your friendship, and with your sectarian enmity; and I expect still so to live, if God is pleased to spare my life; having as little to fear from the one as to hope from the other. There are now many in community who will openly and verbally condemn both me and my motives in this labor, who at the same time mentally assent to the truth of my statements, and secretly applaud my motives. But the time will come, whether I live to see it or not, when justice will be done to my motives, not secretly, but openly and generally. But whatever the contempt, or reproach, or persecution, that I may at present receive, either from you or your friends, nothing shall provoke my indignation, or excite my enmity, or induce me to harbor towards you any other feelings than



those of friendship and good will, and an ardent desire to promote your and the public weal. And I must, and will exercise charity enough towards you to believe that, whatever may be your follies and errors in theory or practice, you do, nevertheless, love Christianity, and desire its general prevalence in the world—that with all the deformity in which you view it, with all the corruptions interwoven with it, in your creed, you discover in it something of a divine original, that no human system can be compared to, or supply the lack of—and that you would most seriously deprecate the extinction of its light, or the general prevalence of infidelity of its truths, among mankind.

If, then, you wish to check the rapid march of infidelity in the land, shut the mouths of scoffers and revilers of religion, rescue Christianity from contempt, and its professors from degradation; and give universal prevalence and efficacy to that Gospel which alone can point out the true path of virtue and happiness to man here, enable him to bear his trials with fortitude, soothe the anguished heart of the afflicted, give stability to his hopes in the hour of dissolution, light the dark avenues of the tomb, and point the trembling souls of mortals as they flutter from their dying lips to the bright and peerless mansions of unsullied day, immortal peace and endless joy—if, I say, you *desire* these things, I entreat you, dear Sir, to abandon at once whatever is extravagant, enthusiastic, wild and ridiculous in your practice, and whatever is absurd, unreasonable, and anti-scriptural in your creed. This is the only way of accomplishing these desirable objects. For these errors have ever been the fruitful source of infidelity and irreligion; and ever will remain their hot-bed and nursery while they continue in being; and especially while they are held to with such pertinacity by men of your rank and station.

Those extravagances in practice, I have already pointed out, or at least so far brought to view, that by what your own memory will supply, you will be enabled to see them, and I trust your own good judgment will teach you to abandon them. But your system of *doctrines*, I conceive, is also fundamentally corrupt, irrational, and unscriptural. And as you perceive I have materially altered my style of writing since my former communications, I shall not any longer beg the question at issue; but shall proceed to

examine the fundamental principles of your system, show by rational and scriptural argumentation their utter destitution of solid foundation, and prove by the same method, the parental character and impartial grace of God, and the ultimate reconciliation and salvation of all his intellectual offspring. And whatever may have been your impressions relative to my style and language in former epistles, I trust you will have no reason to complain hereafter of any want of deference to your standing or respectfulness in my language; though "seeing I have such hope I shall use great plainness of speech." Yours, &c.

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## LETTER V.

### *On the doctrine of the Fall.*

DEAR SIR—Having in my last letter given you the long promised, and as I presume, satisfactory, *explanation*, I shall now, in pursuance of my design, and agreeably to my promise, proceed to examine the fundamental doctrines of your creed, strip them of the disguise with which they are attempted to be concealed from vulgar eyes, in your preaching, show them destitute of foundation in truth, and present you with the simple, but glorious doctrines contained in the Scriptures. And in order that you may be benefitted by what I have to say, I only ask of you, to hear me candidly and patiently, divesting yourself of all prejudice and preconceived opinion, and partiality to systems, so far at least as to give my arguments all the weight to which they may be entitled. You will not be benefitted, nor will it indeed answer for you, to pass by them with contempt, merely because you esteem yourself orthodox, and me heterodox. For this would be again begging the question, assuming more than a discerning community will concede as your right, and exhibiting the same error and folly, the ridiculousness of which I have heretofore sufficiently pointed out. And besides, *true Orthodoxy* may be very different from what you imagine it to be. Orthodoxy

signifies "soundness of doctrine or opinion in matters of religion." And if, on examination, your doctrine appears—as I verily believe it will—very *unsound*, and even rotten to the core, you will readily perceive that you cannot justly claim this high prerogative. And if what *you* esteem heterodoxy, shall on examination prove to be *sound doctrine*, the scales will be turned in my favor, and I might, in imitation of some great names, treat your doctrines with the same contempt with which you affect to treat mine. But to do this I have no disposition, as in fact, there is no necessity for it. And I will add, it never *is* done by any who deem themselves competent fairly to meet, and successfully to refute those they consider, or pretend to consider, in error. "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them."

The first (which is with you a fundamental) doctrine which I shall notice, is that of *original sin*, or the *fall of man*. And lest it should be said that I misrepresent your views upon this subject, I shall state the doctrine in the very language of your own creed taken from the "Confession of Faith and Catechisms of the Presbyterian church in the United States of America, as amended and ratified by the General Assembly in 1821," and from the writings of the founder and most eminent authors of your sect.—By these authorities we are told that "Our first parents, being seduced by the subtlety of satan, sinned in eating the forbidden fruit.....By this sin they fell from their original righteousness, and communion with God, and so became dead in sin, and *wholly defiled in all the faculties and parts of soul and body*. They being the root of all mankind, the guilt of this sin was imputed, and the same death in sin and corrupted nature conveyed to all their posterity, descending from them by ordinary generation. From this original corruption, whereby we are utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all good, and wholly inclined to all evil, do proceed all actual transgressions. Every sin, both original and actual, being a transgression of the righteous law of God, and contrary thereunto, doth in its own nature bring guilt upon the sinner, whereby *he* is bound over to the wrath of God, and curse of the law, and so made subject to death, with all miseries, spiritual,



temporal, and eternal.”—*Confession of Faith*, chapter 6.

“God created man male and female, after his own likeness, in *knowledge, righteousness, and holiness*.....The covenant being made with *Adam*, not only for himself, but for his posterity, all mankind descending from him by ordinary generation, sinned in him, and fell with him in his first transgression. All mankind by their fall lost communion with God, are under his wrath and curse, and so made liable to all the miseries of this life, to death itself, and to the pains of hell forever.”—*See Shorter Catechism, Answers to Questions 10, 16, and 19, published by authority with the Confession.*

By the expression “all mankind” being so frequently used, and the corruption represented so entire and universal, and the penalty so awful, we are to understand that no exception is made; but every individual of the human family—not excepting *infants* as soon as (or even *before*) they are born—is an object of the infinite wrath of God, and subject to his endless curse, merely because our first parents ate of the interdicted fruit! If there is any dispute about this being your doctrine, after the above citations, it can be easily settled by a short quotation from Calvin himself. He says: “And so even infants bring their damnation with them from their mother’s womb; for although they have not yet produced the fruits of their iniquity, they have the seed of it enclosed within them. Nay, their whole nature is, as it were, a seed of sin; so that it cannot be otherwise than odious and abominable to God.” *See Institutes*, Lib. iv, chap. 15, § 10. And lest his readers should misunderstand, or doubt his belief of this sentiment, he indignantly disavows the opposite opinion: “As if,” says he, “I denied that the whole race of Adam was by nature under a curse, so that even *infants before being born to the light, are liable to eternal death.*”

The above quotations present briefly the outlines of your doctrine of original sin, or the fall of man. But that it may be seen in all its relations and bearings, as to cause and effect, it is necessary to state your views of the decree of God, by which the fall was predestinated or foreordained. “God from all eternity did by the most wise and holy counsel of his own will, freely and unchangeably *ordain* whatsoever comes to pass.” “God the creator of all things



doth uphold, direct, dispose, and govern all creatures, actions, and things, from the greatest even to the least, by his most wise and holy providence, according to his infallible foreknowledge, and the free and immutable counsel of his own will, to the praise of the glory of his wisdom, power, justice, goodness, and mercy." *Confession*, chs. 3d and 5th. "God's decrees are the wise, free and holy acts of the counsel of his will, whereby, from all eternity, he hath, for his own glory, unchangeably foreordained whatsoever comes to pass in time, especially concerning angels and men."—*Larger Catechism*, Answer to Question 12.

Calvin says, "I acknowledge this to be my doctrine: that not merely by the permission of God, but by his secret counsel, Adam fell, and by his fall drew all his posterity into eternal ruin." *Respon. ad calumnias nebulonis, Tract Theol.* p. 634. Again he says, "Man is blinded by the will and commandment of God." Piscator, a zealous advocate of the same sentiment, says, "Reprobates (and according to your sentiments a large portion of mankind were such in Adam) are absolutely ordained to this twofold end: to undergo everlasting punishment, and *necessarily* to sin, and therefore to sin that they might be justly punished."

Thus, Sir, I might go on and adduce a large mass of testimony, from your Confession, Catechisms, and most eminent writers, stating and arguing the monstrous doctrine here introduced. But I deem it unnecessary.

What has been stated is sufficiently explicit. And besides, my page seems already defiled by the quotations above made. And were it not an undeniable and humiliating fact that many great men, of undoubted discrimination in other things, and practically ornaments to the Christian church, had believed and argued the doctrine, and that it is still believed and urged upon community, as the *sine qua non*, with a zeal becoming a better cause, and adhered to with the tenacity of the death grasp of a drowning man, and that too by men, like yourself, in the highest stations in society, I should consider it altogether a work of supererogation to attempt an exposition or a formal refutation of it: and should be disposed to say of it, in the language of the poet,

"It is a monster of so frightful mien,  
As, to be hated, needs but to be seen."

But the importance that is still attached to this doctrine by many honest and good people, together with my own convictions of its extremely pernicious tendency, will, I trust, be a sufficient justification of my labor in exposing its falsity.

To begin then, I observe,

1. That the premises are altogether assumed, and perfectly untenable and indefensible.

2. The conclusions or inferences are some of them illegitimate, and taken altogether, are irreconcilable with themselves, and involve absolute impossibilities. And hence,

3. The doctrine is at war both with reason and revelation.

1. *The premises are false.* By what authority, I ask, is it affirmed that man was created in *knowledge, righteousness, and holiness*? Is it not palpably evident, from the scriptural account, that man had as much, and even *more knowledge*, and equally retained the *image of God*, after his transgression as before? After the transgression, "the Lord God said, Behold the *man is become as one of us to know good and evil.*" Gen. iii: 22. Wherein did the *righteousness* and *holiness* of Adam consist, when he was created, and before he had acted at all? "He that *doeth* righteousness is righteous." Adam could no more be *righteous* or *holy* before he *practiced* righteousness and holiness, than he could be unrighteous or sinful before he practiced iniquity. As an unrighteous or sinful character is the result of sinful practices, so a righteous and holy character is the result of righteous and holy practices. A character either of holiness or sinfulness must first be formed *by practice* before it can exist. And it is as absurd to talk about *either* of these characters *without practice*, as it would be to talk of a *conquerer* who had *never conquered*, or a *vanquished* man who had *never been beaten*, merely because, in case of battle, both these characters might be attained; or to talk of a *noisy* infant which had *never made any noise*, merely because it was *capable* of it; or of a *learned* man, who had never been *taught*, because he was capacitated to learn.

Adam was created *innocent*, to be sure; but he was neither virtuous nor vicious till he became so by practice;

*capable* of knowledge, but not possessed of it till he had been taught or learned it: in short, as to his moral character, if we allow that he possessed one, he was like any and all the rest of the human species when they are born into the world. Do you ask, then, wherein consisted the image of God in which he was created? I answer, it consisted in his being, as the child or offspring of God, a rational, intelligent, moral and spiritual being, with capacities for knowledge and happiness: the same as a child that is now born into the world, may be said to be in the image or likeness of its father, though the child may be as yet perfectly ignorant, and neither virtuous nor vicious, though the father may be both *wise* and *virtuous*.

Again, by what authority do you maintain that a "covenant was made with *Adam*, not only for himself, but *for all his posterity*," which, in its details, involved, (as the consequence of its violation on the part of man,) those dreadful and endless calamities, which you profess to believe were the annexed penalty of the divine law? Where is there even the *shadow* of evidence in proof of such a theory? There is none. No account is given in the Bible of any *such* covenant ever having existed. And indeed, none such ever *could* have existed, in justice either to God or man. God had no right (for even Deity himself can never have the *right* to do *wrong*) to impose or inflict such a penalty on Adam's posterity for *his* fault; because it would have been the climax of injustice and cruelty. And Adam had no right to stipulate for his children, in such a foolish covenant as this, and barter away their temporal and eternal well-being, without their consent. No, Sir, even you yourself, as great a stickler as you are for this theory, would not dare, nay, you could not have the hardihood and injustice, even with what you conceive to be your fallen nature, to make a covenant or agreement with the public authorities by which you would jeopardize the lives of *your own children*, by which you would stipulate that unless you lived perfectly sinless all your life time, your children should all be publicly executed. Should you enter into such a stipulation as this, you and your children would be as likely to escape the penalty as Adam and his posterity were, and no more so: for—saying nothing about the *decree* of God by which you hold man fell—your Cate-



chism says he was made "subject to fall." And as much as you would be startled at the idea of making such stipulations, relative to the life or death of your children, the injustice and cruelty of the covenant and penalty agreed to, according to your theory, by Adam for his posterity, would exceed that in your case, as far as *endless* penalties exceed *temporal*.

I shall resume this subject in my next. Yours, &c.

## LETTER VI.

*The same subject continued.*

SIR—In further commenting on the covenant which you say was "made with Adam, not only for himself, but for his posterity," and in consequence of his violation of which, "all mankind, descending from him by ordinary generation, sinned in him, and fell with him in his first transgression," &c., I do aver—and with the least reflection your own good sense must assent to the truth of the assertion—that it was utterly impossible, in the very nature of things, for all mankind (Adam's posterity) to sin in him, in any proper sense of the word sin. What is sin? An apostle hath said, "*Sin is the transgression of the law.*" And again, "where there is no law, there can be no transgression." Now in order for sin to be committed, a law must be promulgated, and that law must be understood by its subjects, and they must transgress it *themselves*. They cannot do it by *proxy*, any more than they can *obey* it by proxy. But will you say that Adam's posterity understood the divine law before they existed? Impossible! and equally so, that they should have transgressed it. Again, I would ask, is it possible for any one to sin, without feeling guilt or remorse? But whoever felt guilt, remorse, or condemnation for Adam's sin, besides himself? None. So far from it, no one would ever have known that Adam did sin, unless they had been told of it, or it had been handed down by tradition. It is true, people may be *traditionated*



into almost any belief. And you and those of your faith may persuade some weak minds to say they feel condemned on account of Adam's sin. But there never was yet an intelligent person that could *understandingly* say, and *feel* that they were guilty on that account. Suppose, for instance, here is a man with a wife and a large family of children about him—under the influence of a most wicked and depraved disposition, he murders his wife and all his children but one infant son; and then commits suicide.—This infant is preserved and brought up to manhood without ever being told any thing of his origin, or the iniquity of his father. Would he, or could he, while thus ignorant, feel any guilt or condemnation for his father's misdeeds? No. Well, suppose he is informed of these, after arriving to manhood—would he then feel guilty on the account? Certainly not. He might feel some grief or mortification, but no guilt.

Now as the crimes of this father were certainly as great, if not greater, than that of Adam in eating the forbidden fruit, why should not the son feel as guilty on account of them, as Adam's posterity for his sin? And if Adam's posterity were *de facto* guilty, and counted and punished as such by God, for *his* sin, why would it not be perfectly right for this young man to be executed on the gallows, because his father was a murderer? You would shudder at such barbarity, cruelty, and injustice: and yet, strange as it is, you do not hesitate to ascribe *greater* cruelty and injustice to the *Father of all mercies*.

But this doctrine of imputation is not only absurd and indefensible in itself, but is directly counter to the word of God. He says, Ezekiel xviii: "THE *soul* that sinneth, *it* shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son; the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him. As I live, saith the Lord God, ye shall no more use this proverb in Israel, saying, the fathers have eaten sour grapes and the children's teeth are set on edge."

Again; when you say that "all mankind, by their fall, lost communion with God" &c., and are "so made liable, to all the miseries of this life, to *death itself*;" &c., meaning temporal death, or the dissolution of the body; you

assume that man would never have died a natural death had he not sinned—that he would have *lived*, in the state in which he was created, *eternally*; than which it is hardly possible to conceive a greater absurdity. Pray tell me how Adam was constituted? Of what materials was he composed? Had he a mortal, or an immortal constitution? By maintaining that he never would have died had he not sinned, you assume at once that he was immortal. Now if he were immortal, and became mortal by sinning, pray tell me why the angels, who, according to your theory, sinned in heaven, did not become mortal by the same process? If Adam were immortal in his natural constitution, it is certain that flesh and blood then partook of immortality! though we read that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God: so that, according to your theory, the sin of our first parent opened a way for man to inherit the kingdom of God, which he never could have done had he not sinned? But I ask, was not Adam “formed of the dust of the earth”? Was he not constituted of the four cardinal elements—earth, air, fire, and water? And are not these elements subject to change, decay and dissolution? Was not Adam subject to the same fate, the same influence, and the same modification, as they? Had he been immersed in water, would he not have drowned? Had he been enveloped in flames, would he not have burned? Had he been smothered and deprived of vital air, would he not have been suffocated? And yet you maintain that he never could have died had he not eaten of the forbidden fruit.

If Adam was once transformed from an immortal to a mortal being by sin, why, I ask, could he not have transformed himself *again* from mortality to immortality, by breaking off from his sins by righteousness, and turning to the Lord, with full purpose of heart to serve and obey him? “To be *carnally minded* is *death*, but to be *spiritually minded* is *life and peace*.” Carnal mindedness and spiritual mindedness are here represented as proper antipodes, and so also are their effects and wages; and one is as certain as the other.

The fact is, “*the creature WAS MADE subject to vanity*,” (imperfection and mortality,) “*not willingly, but by reason of HIM who had subjected the same*; in hope, that the crea-

tion itself shall also be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious freedom of the sons of God."

Adam was evidently created mortal and subject to dissolution; though he probably did not know it till after transgressing. The tree of *knowledge* of good and evil, *revealed* to him this fact; but was *not* the *cause* of his mortality. God says to him after his transgression, "Dust thou art" (not, "dust hast thou made thyself by sinning," but) "*Dust THOU ART*" (for out of the ground wast thou taken) "and unto dust shalt thou *return*."

One other remark I here make, which is worthy of *your* particular notice—If natural death, or the dissolution of the body, were the penalty, or a part of the penalty, threatened to Adam for transgression, then the penalty was not executed as God told Adam it should be, and the serpent told the truth when he said, "ye shall not surely die;" for God had said, "*In the day* thou eatest thereof thou shalt *surely* die." If your theory be correct, that natural death were included in this threatening, then God told the lie, and the serpent the truth! for according to the Scriptures, Adam lived several hundred years after this, and of course did not die "*the day*" he ate of the forbidden fruit.

But this difficulty respecting the threatened penalty, is entirely obviated by admitting, what is evidently the fact, that it had no reference to *natural* death—that it related to *moral* death and condemnation—"to be carnally minded is death"—"the wages of sin is death"—"dead in trespasses and sins." This death Adam died *the very day* he ate of the forbidden fruit: he felt shame, guilt, condemnation, and moral death. Moreover, we may admit that he came to the *knowledge* of his approaching natural death, without supposing this to be any part of the penalty.

Having made these remarks on the general character and untenableness of your premises, I pass—

*Secondly*:—To show that your conclusions or inferences drawn from them are illegitimate, irreconcilable with themselves, and involve absolute impossibilities.

Granting that your premises were correct in every particular—that man was created in knowledge, in righteousness, and true holiness—that he was really created immortal, and as perfect as your creed would make him—by what fair or legitimate mode of reasoning do you conclude that,



by simply eating an apple, or (if this account be figurative) by partaking of the forbidden fruit, our first parents became "*wholly defiled in all the faculties and parts of soul and body*"? As well might you urge that a *bird* had become a *fish* because it chanced to dip the tip of its wing in *water*. It must be a wonderful sagacity, indeed, to discover how one act of this kind could prove a lever by which to overturn at once, and radically change, the *whole moral and physical* world of our race. Recollect I am not laboring to show that sin had *no* effect,—for I have shown you that I believe it *had* an effect, and what that effect *was*—but I think it must be apparent to the most superficial reasoner, that its effects could not have been what your Confession represents them to be—to *wholly defile* our first parents and all their unborn race, in *all* the faculties and parts of *soul and body*.

Can you imagine it possible for a person, who has always lived in habits of virtue, has never practiced iniquity of any kind, allowing such an one could be found in the present day; or for one who has been regenerated, born again, and become spiritually a child of God; or for such a person, say, as John the Baptist, who was filled with the Holy Ghost from his mother's womb;—can you imagine it possible, I say, for such a person to become instantaneously *wholly* and radically defiled, in *all* the faculties and parts of soul and body, by one act of this kind? I hardly think, Sir, you will dare answer in the affirmative. They might, it is true, by one act, *commence* a course of iniquity, which, if persisted in, would ultimately lead to great moral depravity; but could not without a miracle experience such a change as the one under consideration.

Much less could our first parents have transmitted this entire and total defilement "in all the faculties and parts of soul and body" to their posterity, by ordinary generation. Was the act of transgression a *moral* or *physical* act? If it were a *moral* act, how could it produce such a *physical* effect as to "*wholly defile all the faculties and parts of the body*"? If it were a *physical* act, how could it produce such a *moral* effect as to "*wholly defile all the faculties and parts of the soul*"? And if both moral and physical, it were utterly incapable of *wholly* defiling *all* the faculties and parts of *soul and body*. It could not produce such



an effect now: no man could justly be considered as *wholly* defiled in all the faculties and parts of soul and body for *one* act only. We reckon a man vicious, or a bad man, when his *general character*, or a *majority* of his acts are vicious or bad; and virtuous, or a good man, when his general character, or a majority of his acts, are virtuous or good. But we have no account of any other sin that Adam ever committed in his whole lifetime, except that of eating the forbidden fruit: for aught the Bible tells us, he might have been as pure and holy as the angels in heaven, after his transgression; especially if he had *repented* and reformed. But by what process of reasoning you maintain that he transmitted a *total, moral and physical defilement to all his posterity*, I must confess myself totally ignorant; even should I allow that he was himself so entirely defiled. Is it possible now-a-days, Sir, for a father to transmit, by ordinary generation, to his posterity, all his own defilement and guilt of soul and body? You will not pretend it. For the moment you admit it, you will be obliged to admit that if a father is a murderer, his son must be, *ipso facto*, a murderer also, because he descended from his father by ordinary generation. If the father has been guilty of any crime whatever, the son must be guilty of the same, on the same account. If the father has murdered, the son must be hung as a murderer; because in fact, he *is* one by the act of his father! And not only so, but if the father has any defilement or disease of *body*, the son must have it also, because he descends from him by ordinary generation. If the father has a fever-sore, the son will be born with one: if the father has had a leg amputated, the son will be born with but one leg!

Thus, Sir, I might proceed to state an infinite number of consequences and conclusions equally as monstrous as the above, (to own himself an advocate or believer of which, any sensible man would blush,) and yet they would be as *legitimately* drawn from your premises as your own conclusions and inferences are. I know you would shrink from avowing such conclusions; but they follow necessarily from your fundamentals. If, then, you would avoid such monstrous notions and glaring absurdities as are involved in these conclusions, I know of no effectual way for you to do it, but to abandon at once premises so false

and untenable as those on which your creed is founded.

I designed to have noticed some other features, and pointed out some other absurdities involved in your doctrine of *original sin*, or *the fall*, in this epistle; but the prescribed limits which I have assigned to each letter, will not admit of it. And besides, it may be as well, perhaps, to defer this labor till a future number, and attend to it under another head, or properly another branch of the same subject; in the mean time leaving you to digest what has been said.

I think I have said sufficient to show that your premises are false; and of course all *legitimate* conclusions drawn from them must be equally so. The doctrine in question is therefore shown to be unfounded in fact—absurd in its details, and involves impossibilities; and is not only *un-sanctioned* by the word of God, but directly *contrary* to the Scriptures. It cannot, therefore, stand any longer than till brought to the test of reasonable and scriptural investigation.

In my next, I shall take up the counterpart of this subject, viz: TOTAL DEPRAVITY, and what has been neglected here, shall there be attended to; in the mean time, I pray God to be with you and give you “a wise and understanding heart.”

Respectfully Yours, &c.

## LETTER VII.

### *On the Doctrine of Total Depravity.*

DEAR SIR—In continuing the examination of the doctrine of *original sin*, I shall next call your attention to the subject of *total depravity*, the counterpart of what has already been considered. And here it may be necessary to refresh your memory with a few more extracts from your *Confession of Faith*, &c., in addition to what was quoted in my fifth letter.

By the quotations there made we have seen that your creed asserts that “from the original corruption” of mankind, by the sin of Adam, all his posterity “are *utterly*

*indisposed, disabled, and made* OPPOSITE to ALL GOOD, and WHOLLY *inclined to* ALL EVIL, and *that* CONTINUALLY." In the 9th chap. of your Confession it is declared that "Man by his fall into a state of sin, hath wholly lost all ability of will to any spiritual good accompanying salvation; so as a natural man being altogether averse from that which is good, and dead in sin, is not able, by his own strength to convert himself, or to prepare himself thereunto."

Your creed not only maintains, as above, the total inability of mankind to do good, and their entire inclination to all evil, in a state of nature, or in that state in which God creates, or brings them into the world; but further, that they are under the *absolute necessity* of sinning, whether they will or not, and that both their *obedience* and *disobedience* of the commands of God, are sinful. So says your *Confession*, chap. 16, § 7.

"Works done by unregenerate men, although for the matter of them, *they may be things which God commands*, and of *good use both to themselves and others*; yet because they proceed not from a heart purified by faith; nor are done in a right manner, according to the word; nor to a right end, the glory of God; *they are therefore sinful*, and cannot please God, or make a man meet to receive grace from God. And yet the *neglect* of them *is more sinful* and displeasing to God."

How a doctrine with such monstrous features as the above presents, when viewed in connexion with the decrees of God by which every thing was foreordained, and with other parts of your system, particularly reprobation and endless damnation—a doctrine which robs man of his relation and obligation to his Creator, and his Creator of every amiable attribute and every possible claim to the gratitude and obedience of his creatures—how a doctrine, I say, of this character ever obtained in the Christian church, I am totally incapable of accounting or conceiving, excepting from the love of extravagance to which the clergy became so generally addicted during the dark ages of popery. Yet, having once conceived the wild vagary, in connexion with others of a similar character, it became necessary for them to press into their service, a few isolated texts of Scripture as a pretended support to it. And hence, we now find that you quote a number of texts of Scrip-



ture, (though dislocated from their contexts, and applied generally, instead of having the particular application primarily designed,) in support of the doctrine of total depravity. I think it best, therefore, before I proceed to a further examination of the *doctrine*, to notice some of the principal texts on which you rely for its support.

St. Paul's language, (Eph. ii: 3.) "And were by nature the children of wrath even as others," is much relied on in proof of the universal corruption and total depravity of human nature. But you must be sensible, Sir, that the word *nature* is variously used and applied in Scripture; and that its true meaning can be known only by the subject in question, or by the circumstances relating to it. It sometimes signifies the natural course and method of things, sometimes custom, sometimes prevailing disposition, sometimes particular laws in the physical, intellectual or moral world, sometimes characters that distinguish one class from another, or designate individuals in the same class. From the context in which this expression of Paul is found, it is evident he used it to describe that condition in which the Ephesians, and indeed the great mass of the Gentile world, were, previous to their conversion to Christianity. And it is well known that vices of almost every description, and a very general depravity, prevailed among the Gentiles at that time. It was, therefore, in allusion to their *practices*, and not their corrupt *origin*, that the apostle uses the above language: and hence he says, "wherein in time past YE walked according to the course of this world," &c. But that these were not the practices of *all* Gentiles, and that the nature or customs of some of them were good and commendable, is evident from the same apostle, (Romans ii: 14, &c.) "For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by NATURE the things contained in the law, these having not the law, are a law unto themselves; which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness," &c. The text in Ephesians, therefore, when it says they "were by nature children of wrath even as others," signifies no more than the generally prevailing sin and corruption, at that time, of the Gentile world, and that, as elsewhere stated "the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men."



Another text, and one which is considered a main pillar in support of your theory, is in Ps. li: 5. "Behold I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." That this text gives no support to your doctrine, I think will appear obvious, by taking into consideration the time, manner, and circumstances in which it was spoken. It was a penitential Psalm of David—It is the strong language of contrition—spoken in the deep abasement of his soul, in view of the great iniquity of which he had been guilty—the double crimes of adultery and murder; and was spoken, as will be seen by the context, with particular reference to these sins. The meaning of David evidently was, that even had he been *born in sin*, and always trained to evil practices, he could not have done worse. It appears from Scripture, that this form of speech was proverbially used by the Jews, to express the greatest degree of criminality, or the greatest possible degradation of character. When the Pharisees questioned the man who had been blind, concerning the manner in which he had received his sight, the same, or a similar expression occurs. Upon his saying, of Jesus, "if this man was not of God he could do nothing," the Pharisees answer, "Thou wast altogether *born in sins*, and dost thou teach us?" Now had the expression been used among the Jews to signify the corrupt origin and entire depravity of human nature, the Pharisees would not have used it as an expression of ignominy and reproach against the man that had been blind; for in so doing they would have reproached themselves equally with him. But no, *they* were composed of better materials than their despised neighbor! In the pride and haughtiness of their souls, they apply the expression to their neighbor; and David in his deep abasement and contrition of soul, applies this proverbial language to himself.

The following are another set of texts of similar import, and by you applied to the same use. "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. The imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth." Gen. vi: 5, viii: 21. "As it is written, there is none righteous, no not one:—There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together be-

come unprofitable, there is none that doeth good, no not one." Rom. iii : 10, 11, 12. "The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked : who can know it?"—Jer. xvii : 9. "God hath made man upright ; but they have sought out many inventions." Eccl. vii : 29.

In these texts I acknowledge, Sir, we have a dreadful picture of man. And if it could be shown that this were the only and invariable character of all mankind, in all ages of the world, the doctrine of total depravity would seem to derive strong support and countenance from it : though even then, it could not prove that this universal corruption was derived from Adam. But, Sir, your own good sense must satisfy you, if you are not blinded by your partiality to your creed, when you look into the contexts and connexions in which these passages are found, and to the occasions and circumstances that gave rise to them, that they all refer to that *accumulated* wickedness, that *acquired* corruption, that prevailed in the world just before the flood, and at the several subsequent periods named ; that, although they describe in striking language the vicious propensities too frequently observable in large communities, and in individuals, which are frequently the result of evil habits, perverse education, bad example, or other causes which actually exist, and which you will not deny, exert a deleterious influence on the morals and habits of mankind ; yet they do not convey the idea that those abominations are the spontaneous fruits of that nature with which mankind are brought into the world ; nor that they are produced in all ages of the world ; nor that if they were, they are the result of the defection of our first parents. When it is said, "the imagination of man's heart is evil from his *youth*," it is not said to be from his *birth*, nor is it said to be the fact in all ages. It was so from the youth of that generation of which God spake. And this circumstance seems to have excited the commiseration of the Deity. And when Solomon says of men, that they have sought out many inventions, it does not follow that all those inventions are evil, or even useless. I am inclined to believe that as many, if not more, of the inventions that men have sought out, are useful, as are pernicious.

I will here notice one or two more texts, and then conclude this epistle. "What is man that he should be clean ?

and he which is born of a woman, that he should be righteous? How much more abominable and filthy is man which drinketh iniquity like water?" Job xv: 14, 16. It is somewhat singular that these words should ever have been pressed into your service as a support to the doctrine of total depravity: and I am sensible it never would have been done, had not the framers of your creed found themselves in a strait, for want of better evidence. These are the words, not of a person inspired, but of Eliphaz, the wicked Temanite, and pretended friend of Job, whose cruel upbraidings provoked even that patient man to exclaim, concerning him and his other two companions, "miserable comforters are ye all."—"Ye are all forgers of lies; ye are all physicians of no value. Oh! that ye would altogether hold your peace, and it should be your wisdom." And God said to Eliphaz that he had not spoken the thing that was right. I should hardly think you would be disposed to put much confidence in the words of one who was declared and known to be a liar, as Eliphaz, the author of the above words, was.

We have now gone through with a brief examination of the principal texts commonly adduced in support of *original sin* and *total depravity*, and have seen, not only that they do not necessarily give support to such an absurd doctrine, but that when fairly construed, and viewed in connexion with their contexts, and compared with the general tenor of Scripture, and the voice of experience and reason, they cannot be made to give countenance in any way to such a theory.

In my next I shall endeavor to point out some of the absurdities of the doctrine, and show that it is utterly impossible, in the nature of things, that it can be true.

Yours, &c.



## LETTER VIII.

*The same subject continued.*

DEAR SIR—Having shown in my last, that the doctrine of total depravity derives no support from the Scriptures in general, or from the particular passages which you commonly adduce in favor of it, I propose now to show, from the nature of the subject, and the character of the doctrine, that it is impossible it can be true. And here I would observe, I shall not attempt to be very systematic, nor at all particular in the arrangement of my arguments, but shall throw them together in my plain every-day style, just as they happen to come into my mind as I pass along. And

1. The doctrine of total depravity cannot be admitted as true, without denying man's accountability, and contending that the posterity of Adam cannot sin. Sin is the transgression of a *law*. A law is a moral *obligation*, binding upon the subject. Obligation arises from *benefits* received. Man's nature being *totally depraved* and *wholly evil*, he has received *no benefit* from his Creator—nay, his very *existence is a curse*. Therefore, his nature being *evil*, and his existence a *curse*, (if the doctrine of total depravity be true,) he has received *no benefit* from his Creator; consequently is under *no obligation* to him; and where *no obligation exists, there can be no law, and where no law is, there can be no transgression*. Hence, if man is totally depraved he cannot sin. You cannot evade the force of this argument by contending that man's nature (or rather that of the first man) was good when first brought into existence, but became evil by his transgression in Eden: because the Deity has created, since Adam's sin, and still continues to create innumerable multitudes of human beings, and brings them into the world just such creatures as he pleases—just such creatures as they are. Each human being that now comes into the world is the production of God's creating power; and, if totally depraved, cannot sin, for the reason above stated.

Moreover, whatever guilt or pollution to Adam or his posterity, you may suppose was the result of his transgres-

sion, you hold that this transgression was decreed or fore-ordained of God. And can any rational man suppose that creatures can be under any obligation to obey a law, when their progenitor was foreordained by the legislator to break that law and transmit to them a nature totally evil and entirely incapacitated to obey such law? Impossible.

Another reason why man cannot sin, if the doctrine of total depravity be true, is, that he, being by nature wholly opposite to every thing good, and wholly inclined to every thing evil, having nothing good in or about him, *can have no principle within to dictate aright—no standard of moral rectitude*, from which a deviation would be sinful. In fact, he can have no *conscience*; or if he has, it must be wholly *vitiating*, and would lead him into corruption and error, were he to follow its dictates. And, Sir, I will here add, that every instance in which you, or I, or any other individual of the human family ever felt guilt, remorse, or condemnation for vice or sin of any kind, is a refutation of the doctrine of total depravity; and proves that man is *not wholly* corrupt, and entirely destitute of all moral goodness; for if he were, he could never feel guilt or remorse of conscience.

2. The doctrine of total depravity is an impeachment of the divine character. To say God originated a plan to save a race of beings that were entirely destitute of every thing good; that were wholly evil, and in fact, worse than good for nothing! To say he sent his Son into the world to save such creatures,—that Jesus Christ, the well-beloved and only begotten of the Father, came to our world and labored, and toiled, and wrought miracles, and preached, and suffered, and bled, and died, to purchase and save, redeem and restore, such a creature as man, so odious, abominable and worthless! To say all this, implicates the divine character, and particularly divine wisdom, in a most shocking manner.

3. The doctrine of total depravity is at war with the most positive and plain declarations of our Saviour and of the Scriptures. When there were brought unto Jesus, little children, and even infants, (see Matt. xix: 13, &c., Mark x: 13, Luke xviii: 15,) he took them in his arms and blessed them, saying, *of such is the kingdom of God—of such is the kingdom of heaven*. Now, you will not deny

that these infant children were in a *state of nature*. If, then, that nature were totally depraved, we must understand our Saviour as saying, "suffer totally depraved beings to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of totally depraved creatures consisteth the kingdom of God!" "Except ye be converted and become totally depraved ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven!" Matt. xviii : 3. It is, (unless we pervert the language or meaning of Jesus in his declaration relative to little children,) utterly impossible to understand him in any other sense than as directly contradicting the doctrine in question. And equally so in many other declarations—instance the following:—"How much better is a man than a sheep—ye are of more value than many sparrows." When God created man, he pronounced him, and all the rest of his works, good, "very good;" and he has never reversed this declaration. And St. Paul says, "every creature of God is good." Many of the parables of our Lord, and indeed the whole plan of man's redemption and salvation, go to show the intrinsic excellence of human nature, and the high value that even God put upon it. The three parables in Luke xv, are to this effect—the lost sheep, the lost piece of silver, and the lost prodigal—the lost sheep was a sheep still, notwithstanding it was lost, and intrinsically just as valuable as before it was lost, or after it was found. The piece of silver was silver still. And the prodigal was just as much a *son* when lost as when found, had the *same father* and bore the *same image* and *relationship* to him; although when estranged from him, he deprived himself of the enjoyment of his father's kindness and favor.

4. Numerous facts and almost universal observation prove the doctrine of total depravity false. Look to man in all ages of the world, all states of society, and all stages of his existence, and you will not find an age in which entire and unmixed evil prevails, nor a state of society without some remains of goodness, nor a stage in the existence of man wherein no traits of moral excellence are to be found. In the most degenerate age of the world or state of society, you will find some noble exceptions to the general vice, and in the most depraved and polluted wretch that walks the earth in human form, some remains of that exalted and dignified nature with which his Creator has



endowed him. But view mankind generally—"take them all in all"—how many excellencies do we see—the smiling babe at the mother's breast—the innocent prattle of the little child—the unsuspecting ingenuousness and integrity of youth before they have learned to practice deception and vice by the bad examples of the world—the affectionate solicitude and kind offices of father and mother, husband and wife, son and daughter, brother and sister. Whence spring all these tender feelings, these kindly affections, these benevolent exertions to promote each other's happiness?—Whence flows the tear of sympathy for the distress of others? What impulse pushes us irresistibly on to danger, labor and sufferings, to rescue a fellow-being from impending ruin? Is it possible for all these to spring from a totally corrupt fountain? Are they all odious and sinful in the sight of God? So says the doctrine of total depravity. But, Sir, this is impossible. God does and must approve them wherever they are found, though they *be but natural*; for he commands and ordains them. Man's nature is good and sinless; and when he acts according to its dictates he is happy and approved by his Maker. But when he perverts and abuses it, when he acts *unnatural*, then is he guilty and unhappy. Hence, Paul speaks of those who go *contrary to nature*, and those who are *without natural* affection, as the very worst characters in the world. (Rom. i: 26, 27; 2 Tim. iii: 3.) "Take nature's path and mad opinions leave," and with the assistance of the revelation God has given us we shall not materially err.

You contend that Adam was created perfect, or far more so than any of his posterity have ever been since. But, Sir, I believe the world furnishes many far more noble examples of perfection and dignified virtue than Adam ever exhibited, even before his defection. I might refer you to many examples in almost all ages of the world: But one instance shall suffice for the present. Look to Joseph, the beloved son of the patriarch Jacob. What fault do you find with his character and life? Where can you find one blemish? Where an instance of depravity? Follow him through all the stages of his life, from childhood to youth, manhood, and old age—see him maltreated and abused, persecuted and sold, betrayed and imprisoned—see him resisting the strongest temptations, the machinations of an

artful and designing woman, with every prospect of secrecy of his crime, and promotion to honor and wealth if he yielded, and the certain expectation of imprisonment and ruin if he resisted—see his virtue and integrity triumphing over all this formidable array of besetting temptations—and then say, if Joseph was *totally depraved*, destitute of every moral excellency, wholly opposed to every thing good, and wholly inclined to every thing evil! Say, if he did not exhibit more firmness of virtue, more integrity of character, more, much more moral excellency than Adam ever exhibited? Did Adam resist more powerful temptations than these? Would *he* with his *perfect nature* have withstood what Joseph withstood with his *fallen nature*? Did Adam ever resist a *single* temptation? Did he not yield to the very *first* assault of the tempter? How then can you believe that *he* was *perfect in virtue* and even in *holiness*, and *all his posterity entirely devoid of every particle of moral excellency*? But the world has produced many examples of virtue and excellence of character equal to that of Joseph, and far surpassing in dignity any thing that we know of our first parents; and every one of them is a refutation of the monstrous notion of total depravity.

Why, Sir, if I believed in the doctrine of total depravity, I should not dare to live among men. I should expect that every morsel of food I took from the hand of a fellow-being would be mingled with corrosive sublimate; every draught of water tinctured with arsenic or night-shade; that some deadly poison would be placed in every dish and every cup I took; that every man I met in the street would have a dagger concealed under his cloak, or a brace of pistols about his person with which to take my life! Nay, I should not even dare, unarmed, to meet you in the streets of this city; for notwithstanding your fair reputation, weight of moral character, and Christian profession, I should fear (did I believe human nature was totally depraved, “wholly opposite to every thing good, and wholly inclined to every thing evil,” “totally defiled in all the parts and faculties of soul and body”) that all these pretensions and professions were nothing but hypocrisy and sheer imposition, practised on community to deceive the simple, and prey upon the unwary; and that you were capable of the darkest and bloodiest deeds of villainy! In short, I should flee from the abodes

and all the haunts of men, retire to some far-off recess in the wilderness, or some deep and lonely cavern, and there shut myself up where human eye could never see me more. But no, Sir, I have no fears of this kind; no such dreadful apprehensions to torment and drive me from society. And for the plain reason that I do not believe in this doctrine. I can confide in your goodness, your *natural goodness of heart*; and in that of my fellow-beings generally, and believe there is so much goodness and benignity in the hearts of men that they would sooner do me a kindness than an injury.

I know of but one argument in the world that appears at all in favor of the doctrine of total depravity—that is, the fact that some eminent preachers of your denomination have publicly declared and maintained that they should hereafter *rejoice* in ecstasies of bliss at the sight of the *unspeakable* and *endless torments of the damned in hell*! Could I believe such men spoke from experience and observation of the natural feelings of their own hearts, I should be inclined to believe that *they* possibly *might be* totally depraved. But I cannot think so bad even of *these* men; for they are most of them touched with feelings of pity and commiseration of the sufferings of their fellow-beings here, and are making great exertions to save mankind from so dreadful a fate hereafter. And hence the benevolence of heart they manifest towards mankind for time and eternity, betrays the falsity of their creed and professions that they shall hereafter rejoice at the sight of the miseries of their fellow-beings. And hence, as this last vestige of proof is betrayed and removed by the feelings and conduct of its own advocates, I may now safely dismiss this subject from further notice, believing that your discriminating mind will properly weigh the arguments adduced, and discard a doctrine that begins, and continues, and ends in such palpable inconsistency and absurdity, as that of total depravity.

In my next I shall commence the examination of the doctrine of particular election and reprobation.

Yours, &c.



## LETTER IX.

### *On the doctrine of Election and Reprobation.*

DEAR SIR—Of all the doctrines and dogmas in the creed of John Calvin, there is probably none of which you and other advocates of that system are more ashamed, than that now to be examined—none which you more studiously strive to conceal, or dress in a fictitious garb, or whose deformities more effort is made to keep from public view, than the doctrine of particular election and reprobation. And I do not wonder that it is so. I rather wonder that the doctrine could ever have been invented by any man that had ever seen a Bible, or made a profession of the Christian religion—that it has been so long maintained in a church called Christian—or that any one can be found at the present day, who will maintain, either from sinister or conscientious motives, a doctrine so barbarous as this.—And I could not have believed but that this relic of darkness and cruelty had long since sunk into merited oblivion, had I not occasionally heard it indirectly drop from the lips of yourself and others of your order, and on opening your *Confession of Faith*, (which, by the bye, is not designed for vulgar eyes to see,) found the doctrine there set forth in bold relief as the *summum bonum* of your creed, and authorised as the standard doctrine of your church, *even at this day*, by your General Assembly.

Read the following, Sir, from your own precious "*Confession*," and tremble, lest you be one of the non-elect:—

"By the decree of God, for the manifestation of his glory, some men and angels are predestinated unto everlasting life, and others foreordained to everlasting death.

"These angels and men, thus predestinated and fore-ordained, are particularly and unchangeably designed; and their *number is so certain and definite that it cannot be either increased or diminished.*

"Those of mankind that are predestinated unto life, God, before the foundation of the world was laid, according to his eternal and immutable purpose, and the secret counsel and good pleasure of his will, hath chosen in Christ

unto everlasting glory, out of his mere free grace and love, *without any foresight of faith or good works*, or perseverance in either of them, or any other thing in the creature, as conditions, or causes moving him thereunto; and all to the praise of his glorious grace.

“As God hath appointed the *elect* unto glory, so hath he, by the eternal and most free purpose of his will, fore-ordained all the means thereunto. Wherefore, they who are elected, being fallen in Adam, are redeemed by Christ, are effectually called, &c. *Neither are any other redeemed by Christ*, effectually called, justified, adopted, sanctified, and saved, *but the elect only*.

“The rest of mankind, God was pleased, according to the unsearchable counsel of his own will—to pass by, and to *ordain them to dishonor and wrath* for their sins, to the praise of his glorious justice.”—*Confession of Faith*, chap. iii: § 3, 4, 5, 6, 7.

“*Elect infants*, dying in infancy, are regenerated, and saved by Christ, through the Spirit, who worketh when, and where, and how he pleaseth. So also are all other elect persons who are incapable of being outwardly called by the ministry of the word.

“*Others not elected*, although they may be called by the ministry of the word, and may have some common operations of the Spirit, yet they never truly come to Christ, and therefore *cannot be saved*: much less can men not professing the Christian religion, be saved in any other way whatsoever, be they never so diligent to frame their lives according to the light of nature, and the law of that religion they do profess; and to assert and maintain that they may, is very pernicious and to be detested.”—*Confession*, chap. x: § 3 and 4.

This, Sir, is your doctrine, unvarnished, undisguised, as set forth in your *Confession of Faith*. And now I ask you, if you honestly and sincerely believe in it, whether you do or can consider yourself perfectly secure and safe—whether you are, or can be certain of your own election—whether you are sure that you were not reprobated from all eternity, as a vessel of wrath fitted to destruction? Are you not deceived? True, you may have had “some common operations of the Spirit;” yet you may have “never truly come to Christ,” and therefore, it is possible you

"*cannot be saved.*" You and Mr. Lansing, I understand, have once acknowledged that you were deceived in relation to your conversion, and were never undeceived till after Mr. Finney's visit to this place, when you think you were truly converted. Now I beseech you to pause and reflect, and inquire, whether it is not possible that you were mistaken this last time as well as the first. Appearances may have deceived you. You might, from your habits of intimacy with the elect, and from the subject of religion being so much agitated at that time, have had some common operations of the Spirit, and so received a false impression relative to your calling and election, and after all, be found on the left hand, excluded from the society of the elect, and have to take up your abode with reprobates and devils to all eternity. I forget, however, while I am expostulating with you, and endeavoring to dissuade you from your strong confidence in your own election and salvation, and to incite you to a more careful examination of your condition, that after all, if the doctrine be true, it is of no use; for all your prayers and confessions, and penitence and endeavors, be they ever so diligent, to frame your life according to the best light you have, are perfectly unavailing, and can do no good. If you *are* a reprobate, you never can be effectually called nor saved. Your doom is fixed—your fate is sealed, and eternity can never see an end of your torments, or hear the termination of your groans!

But I do wrong, perhaps, to reason with you on the supposition of the doctrine being true; for I do not admit that it can—not even that there is the *remotest possibility* of its being true. For it is not only unsanctioned by the word of God, but directly opposed to its plainest testimonies. True, you quote many texts of Scripture with the design to give countenance to it; but they are all either isolated texts, disjointed and entirely separated from their connexion, totally perverted from their original design, and grossly misapplied; or most barbarously garbled, and prevented from speaking their whole and entire meaning with their contexts. Rom. ix: 11, 13, 16, 18, 22, and 23, which your Confession quotes in support of your theory, say nothing about "some men and angels being predestinated to everlasting life, and others foreordained to everlasting death."



There is not a single word said in these passages, either about "everlasting life, or everlasting death," and evidently no application of them to such a subject was intended.— They evidently relate to the wisdom and sovereignty of God in his making choice of Jacob instead of Esau, as the seed of promise, through whose lineage the Messiah was to come; and to the establishment of a church of elect or chosen believers, zealous of good works; not however to the eternal exclusion of the non-elect, or then unbelievers, but for the purpose of manifesting to the world, through the medium of the elect church, (who were the chosen vessels of mercy,) the glory and excellency of that kingdom which was then set up in the earth, and into which "all Israel, with the fulness of the Gentile" world, were ultimately to be gathered. Although for the time being, they were many of them, and particularly the Jews, vessels of wrath, fitted to destruction, and did afterwards actually suffer that destruction for which they were fitted, by having filled up the measure of their iniquities, when wrath came upon them to the uttermost; when Jerusalem was destroyed, their temple burnt to ashes, their government subverted, and they scattered among all nations to reap the bitter fruits of their own evil doings. Although it is said, "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated," yet we are not to understand this hatred to be positive, but comparative: the same as where our Saviour says, "if any man come unto me and hate not father and mother, and wife and children, and brethren and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." Luke xiv: 26. See this explained in Matt. x: 37. If the temporary falling away, or rejection of Israel, or the vessels of wrath were intended to signify their eternal damnation, and endless exclusion from bliss, the apostle would hardly have said, "Have they stumbled that they should fall? *God forbid*: but rather through their fall, salvation is come unto the Gentiles to provoke them to jealousy." Nor would he have proceeded immediately to predict their final and universal ingathering and salvation. See Rom. xi: from the 11th verse to the end. If the framers of your Confession of Faith had not handled the word of God deceitfully, when they quoted verse 33, of this chapter, "O, the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge

of God!" &c., they would never have adduced it as proof of the consolation of saints, arising from a belief in the doctrine of election and reprobation, and preceded it with another text from the ninth chapter, that has no connexion with it: but they would have adduced it as proof of the joy and consolation, arising from a belief in the final salvation of all Israel, together with the fulness of the Gentiles, and would have quoted from the apostle the verse preceding it, on which the joyful and exulting strain of St. Paul was founded, viz: "For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might HAVE MERCY UPON ALL. O, the depth of the riches," &c.

Again, had not the framers of your *Confession* been straitened even for *apparent* proof of election and reprobation, or had they been willing the Scriptures should go ungarbled, and speak for themselves, they never would have given so partial an exhibition of the doctrine contained in the first chapter of Ephesians, quoting the 9th and 11th verses, and designedly leaving out the 10th, which is so essential to the true understanding of the other. I will here quote the 9th, 10th, and 11th verses, putting the middle verse, which your *Confession* leaves out, in italics, and leave you and my readers to judge of the importance of the 10th verse: "Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself; *that in the dispensation of the fulness of times, he might gather together in one, all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth, even in him*, in whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will." Now, Sir, I appeal to your own candor and good sense, whether the 10th verse is not the very key to the proper understanding of the other two verses? whether the universal ingathering of all things in Christ, the head of every man, is not the very thing embraced in the "mystery of God's will," which he had "made known" to the apostles and primitive disciples?—and whether they had not already, by faith, obtained and entered into the enjoyment of that inheritance which it was revealed to them should ultimately be enjoyed by all mankind; so that they were a kind of *first fruits* unto God, denoting what the

*whole harvest* would be, in the end, when all should be gathered in? For "if the first fruit be holy, the lump is also holy."

Again, when you quote and endeavor to explain the text, "Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor?" you seem to forget all analogy, and lay reason and experience entirely aside, in order to make the text countenance your views. Did you ever know a potter make a vessel but what he designed for some good use? Some, to be sure, are applied to more honorable uses than others, but I presume you never saw a potter make one that he had *no* use for; much less did you ever know a potter to make a vessel *on purpose to be angry at it as long as he lived!* "The vessel that the potter made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter; so he made it again, another vessel, as *seemed* good, (*not as it seemed evil,*) to the potter to make it." You also seem to forget that it is said, respecting some who were for a season considered vessels of wrath, "I will call them my people which were not my people, and her beloved which was not beloved. And it shall come to pass, in the place where it was said, Ye are not my people, there shall they be called the children of the living God."

In short, Sir, all the passages commonly adduced in support of the gloomy doctrine under examination, are either misapplied, or perverted from their natural import, and explained contrary to the analogy of things, and the general tenor of Scripture; and hence the doctrine is anti-scriptural as well as God-dishonoring.

Yours, &c.



## LETTER X.

*The same subject continued.*

SIR—It is a rule with me, and one which I think ought to be adopted by all protestant Christians, to admit no doctrine as undoubtedly true, but such as are clearly and unequivocally taught in the Bible ; much less to admit as true, without this sanction, a doctrine so strange and extraordinary, so cruel and barbarous, so much at variance with reason and common sense, so monstrous and derogatory to the divine character, as that under consideration.

In my last, I showed that the principal texts of Scripture commonly adduced in support of your doctrine of election and reprobation, are most grossly perverted, misapplied, and wrested from their obvious intention, whenever they are made to countenance such a doctrine ; and that, by no fair construction can they be made to yield it the least support. I also showed that those texts, in connexion with their contexts, and the general tenor of Scripture, went to support a far more glorious and beautiful theory ; one that is highly honorable to the divine Being, showing him to be impartially good and affectionate to all his children, and purposing their ultimate holiness and happiness. Indeed, it is impossible that a revelation coming from God, can teach a doctrine so derogatory to the divine character, so hostile to reason, and so entirely at war with all nature, as the Presbyterian, or Calvinistic doctrine of election and reprobation. And a rational and enlightened mind would sooner believe that the Bible was a sheer fabrication, a bundle of absurdity and falsehood, than that a true revelation from God could teach a doctrine so monstrous as this—one that nature pronounces false in every chapter and section of her ample page. And hence it is, that so many good men have been driven into skepticism, and finally rejected Christianity altogether. Being taught to believe that Calvinism was the doctrine of the Bible—not giving themselves leisure to examine the word of life for themselves, but taking on trust what they heard from the pulpit,—through a perversion of the Scriptures, and the

deceptive mode of handling the word of God, practised by learned clergymen, these men, of naturally strong and good minds, have abandoned Christianity entirely; justly concluding, if the Bible taught such a doctrine, it could not be of God, it were unworthy of its reputed author. Whereas, if they had *searched the Scriptures* attentively for themselves, without regard to the interpretations of Calvinistic Doctors, they would have found them worthy of all acceptance, and that the doctrine of election and reprobation formed no part of the system of divinity therein taught. And I verily believe that Calvinism is the fruitful source of the extensively prevailing infidelity in our country.

By the quotations I have already made from your *Confession of Faith*, we perceive that you hold and maintain, that God foreordained whatever comes to pass—that he decreed the sin of our first parents, and annexed the penalty of infinite and endless torment to the effect of his own decree—that by his decree, some men and angels are (elected from this apparently common ruin of all) predestinated to everlasting life, and others foreordained to everlasting death, and their number is so certain and definite, that it cannot be either increased or diminished—that the elect were chosen or elected from all eternity, and that without any foresight of faith or good works in them—that the elect are redeemed by Christ, effectually called, and will infallibly be saved—that none others, but the elect only, are redeemed, or effectually called; none others can be saved, though they be ever so diligent to frame their lives according to the best light they have—that there are elect infants, (and probably idiots,) and these also will be regenerated and saved by Christ; and as the elect only are redeemed, as they only can be saved, those infants not elected, (for the mention of elect infants implies there are some not elected,) not being redeemed, cannot be saved; they are of course reprobated, and foreordained to everlasting death, to the pains of hell forever. Thus, according to your theory, man is forced into existence without any act or volition of his own, goes through the world and does the best he can, and is then forced out of it, and doomed to the pains of a never-ending hell, for which he was foreordained long before he had a being! Even tender infants that are barely born to the light, gasp once, and die, without

knowing their right hand from their left, are hurried away, (if they are not of the elect,) to groan in endless anguish, and be the companions of devils and damned spirits, world without end !

O ! my friend, is it *possible* that you *can* believe in such horrid notions as the above, which are so decidedly taught in your Confession of Faith ? Do pause, I beseech you, and consider—reflect seriously on the nature and tendency of such a theory, before you ever attempt to preach it again. But if you *do in reality* believe it, I would ask again, how is it possible for you to believe at the same time, as you and your brethren often preach, the doctrine of *free moral agency* ? If the number, and all the actions, and the final destiny of the elect and reprobates were fixed by an irrevocable decree, long before they had a being, why be guilty of such a climax of absurdity as that of maintaining, that life and death, good and evil, are set before them ; that they can choose or refuse, and according to their choice will be their everlasting destiny ?—that if any perish, it is their own fault ? Why exhort people to be up and doing while the day lasts, for it will soon be forever too late ? Why tell them to make their calling and election sure ? Why entreat them by all the joys of heaven, and all the terrors of hell, to repent and get religion, and come to Christ, while the day of grace lasts ? Do you believe it possible for one, that “ God did, from all eternity, elect to everlasting life,” to be eternally damned ? No, Sir, you believe no such thing, if you believe your own creed. Well, do you believe there ever was, or ever will be, a day of grace with the reprobate—that there ever was, or ever will be, a time when it were even *possible* for the non-elect to be saved ? No : for none but the elect were redeemed—none others are effectually called—none others can be saved, if what I have quoted from your Confession be true. It were as utterly impossible for one of the elect to be damned, or to fail of salvation, however vile his character may be, as it would be for him to dethrone Jehovah himself. It were as impossible for one of the reprobates to be saved, or to avoid endless damnation, be he ever so virtuous or good, as for a fish to drink up the whole ocean in which he swims.

Why then do you, after setting a Calvinistic table, cover it with Arminian bread ? Why pretend that the eternal



destiny of man depends on the exertions he here makes? Why make such unwearied efforts to get up revivals of religion? Why tell your people, if they are saved, it must be through their own exertions to get religion; and if they are damned, it is their own fault, because they have neglected the means of grace, sinned away the day of grace, &c.? Why tell about the Heathen being exposed to endless damnation, and hundreds and thousands of them daily sinking down to hell, all for lack of knowledge? Now, you believe none of this stuff, if you believe your own creed. If your Confession of Faith expresses your real sentiments, you believe that all of the human family that it ever was, or ever will be possible should be saved, were unconditionally elected from all eternity, and not one of them possibly can be lost; and all the rest were unconditionally reprobated to endless misery, from all eternity, and not one of them possibly can be saved. What then can be your motive in feeding the people with Arminian doctrine, when you believe no such thing? I cannot account for this inconsistency in your creed and preaching, except on one or the other of the two following suppositions: viz. 1. That you are perfectly aware that an enlightened people do abhor from their very souls, and *will not receive* nor swallow barefaced Calvinism—that it is too grating both to their ears and hearts, to be admitted for one moment—that you would lose all your hearers, if you preached it plainly, excepting a few dark-souled bigots and worshippers of yourself, who as firmly believe in your infallibility, as ever a Roman Catholic did in that of the Papal See; and therefore you find yourself obliged to cook it up in such a manner, mixing Arminian bread with it, and so interlarding it with the doctrine of free will, as to make it in some measure palatable to your hearers. Or 2. That you are perfectly bewildered by the absurdity and *mysticism* of your system—in as much confusion in your own mind, as the builders of Babel were in their language—and therefore do not know how to preach any better, or how to get along with such a heterogeneous mass of contradictory notions and doctrines in any other way than to preach Calvinism and Arminianism, either *alternately*, or mixed up *together*, just as the current shall chance to lead, or the humor happen to take you. For in reality these two doc-

trines are as opposite to each other as antipodes, and can no more be made to harmonize, than oil and water can be made to unite or mingle together.

I like to see men consistent—I like to see them honest—if they believe in Calvinism, let them preach Calvinism, pure and uncorrupted ; let them not adulterate it with Arminianism, and attempt to take a part of two systems so utterly irreconcilable, and to blend those things together which never can be united.

However, on reflection and strict examination, Calvinism and Arminianism do not contradict one another *any more* than Calvinism contradicts itself. Take for example the language of your creed: “By their fall all mankind lost communion with God, are under his wrath and curse, and so made liable to all the miseries of this life, to death itself, and to the pains of hell forever.” Now the meaning intended to be conveyed by this language, is, that by Adam’s sin, or as a just penalty therefor, all mankind, without exception, were liable to all miseries, temporal and eternal, which would be no more than they *justly deserved* to suffer for this act. Then again you maintain that “every sin, both original and actual, doth in its own nature, bring guilt upon the sinner whereby he is bound over to the wrath of God, &c., and so made subject to death with all miseries, spiritual, temporal and eternal,” and that the damnation which reprobates will suffer, will “be for their sins inflicted.” Now who does not see the most palpable contradiction in the above ? For if, as the first quotation expresses it, “all mankind were liable to all the miseries of this life, to death itself, and the pains of hell forever” as a just penalty for *Adam’s* sin, it must be plain that none of Adam’s posterity can ever suffer, or even be liable to suffer *any sort* of punishment for their *own sins*, for all that they *can endure*, both here and hereafter, in time and eternity, is only a just punishment for the sin of their *progenitor* ; so that it will be utterly impossible to punish them for their own actual transgressions. Again: your Catechism asserts that “God did from all eternity elect some to everlasting life,” &c. &c. Now tell me, dear Sir, how these “some,” that were *from all eternity elected to everlasting life*, could be, as stated above, “*liable—to the pains of hell for ever?*” Just as liable to these pains of

hell, as the eternal and irrevocable decree of Jehovah was to be broken, and no more !

But, Sir, aside from the fact already shown, that your system contradicts the Scriptures, contradicts other doctrines which you attempt to blend with it, and contradicts itself, in the most palpable manner ; the monstrous partiality, the infinite cruelty, and the unparalleled tyranny, that the doctrine of particular election and reprobation ascribes to the Father of the spirits of all flesh, ought to lead you and every rational mind, not only to doubt its truth, but to reject it with abhorrence, as totally unworthy of its pretended origin, or supposed divine authority, or of the reception or credence of any enlightened soul of Adam's numerous race. Why, Sir, it is impossible in the nature of things, to depict or conceive of a worse, or a more odious character than that which this doctrine ascribes to our heavenly Father. It is even worse than that which is commonly ascribed to the devil himself. It is worse even than you believe the devil to be. For neither you nor any other one, that I know of, ever ascribed to that evil being the barbarous act of *creating on purpose to torment, to all eternity*. But your doctrine of election and reprobation does ascribe such an act to God. According to this theory, God had no other motive in creating the reprobate, but to torment him to all eternity with infinite cruelty for the gratification of himself and other beings, called saints, almost, though not quite, as bad as himself. In my opinion, it would be a libel on the character of the devil to accuse him of such deeds of infinite malice as this ! God is therefore represented to be as much worse than the devil as his power is greater.

This I say, dear Sir, in all due charity and good will to you ; for it is not yourself that I abhor and detest, (for I have a real friendship and regard for you,) but it is your *doctrine*—that is the abominable thing that my soul hateth. I have charity for you, and for many others that embrace your system of doctrines, and verily believe that there are many of them that are sincere, that are truly devotional and pious ; though their piety does by no means arise from their system—their hearts are far better than their heads. But I believe you and they are deceived, deluded, bewildered. Therefore I thus speak, and would fain undeceive



you and them, if it were in my power. It was doubtless for this purpose, and with this motive, that an eminent divine, once a believer in the system, speaks in the following forcible and pointed language of the abominations of that doctrine, and warns his fellow-men against it. The extract is from one of Llewellyn's tracts. [See Monthly Review, enlarged, vol. viii. 1792.] He writes thus :—

“I challenge the whole body and being of moral evil itself, to invent, or inspire, or whisper any thing blacker or more wicked ; yea, if sin itself had all the wit, the tongues and pens of all men and angels to all eternity, I defy the whole, to say any thing worse of God than this. O sin, thou has spent and emptied thyself in the doctrine of John Calvin ! And here I rejoice that I have heard the utmost that malevolence itself shall ever be able to say against infinite benignity ! I was myself brought up and tutored in it, and being delivered and brought to see the evil and danger, am bound by my obligations to God, angels and men, to warn my fellow-sinners ; I, therefore, here before God and the whole universe, recall and condemn every word I have spoken in favor of it. I thus renounce the doctrine as the rancor of devils, a doctrine, the preaching of which is babbling and mocking, its prayers blasphemies, and whose praises are the horrible yellings of sin and hell.”

Though the above language is strong, plain, and severe, yet in general I think it correct ; and verily believe the writer was an honest man. He had been trained up in the embrace and belief of Calvinism : and when its odious and dreadful features were clearly seen and known, he like an honest man, renounced and condemned it at once.— And I would now say to you, dear Sir, in the affectionate language of Jesus to the lawyer, “go thou and do likewise.”

In my next, I shall commence the examination of the doctrine of endless misery.

Affectionately Yours.

## LETTER XI.

### *On the doctrine of Endless Misery.*

DEAR SIR—I have in some measure anticipated the discussion of this doctrine. In my remarks on the doctrines of “the fall,” “total depravity,” “election and reprobation,” &c., I took occasion to point out their absurdity, inconsistency, want of scriptural support, their opposition to every noble and exalted conception of the divine Being, the monstrous cruelty and barbarity they ascribe to him, &c. &c., but what principally gave them this character and appearance, was, the fact of their all pointing out, and necessarily leading to, the doctrine of *never ending misery*—this is the *ultima thule*, the final termination, the climax of all those doctrines, on which I have animadverted.—Had they not terminated here, they would be far less exceptionable than I now view them to be. They might have been borne, and even admitted in a certain sense, had they not aimed at the establishment of this, of all doctrines ever invented by men, the most cruel, pernicious and God-dishonoring. Give me any thing, even the wildest vagaries ever conceived by a diseased imagination, rather than the doctrine of endless damnation; a doctrine which alike robs God of his glory and parental character, Jesus of his triumph and joy, the Gospel of its chief and crowning excellence, and man of all rational enjoyment here, and the hope of immortal felicity beyond the grave.

I know this doctrine is a darling part of your theory, and is clung to with more than ordinary tenacity by yourself and the clergy of your stamp, because *this* is the principle instrument employed to *frighten* weak-minded men, *women and children*, into a *profession* of your other dogmas, and to drive those into your church whom otherwise you could not persuade to join.

The principal sources on which you rely for the support of this doctrine, are, 1. The prejudices and traditions of the people; who have for a few centuries past been taught from their infancy to receive this notion as the *sine qua non* of the Christian faith; and hence, the doctrine, though

evidently unreasonable, is taken for granted by the generality of people, and supposed to be true because their fathers believed it, and their grandfathers before them. And 2, as the natural consequence of these prejudices and traditions, a false mode of interpreting the Scriptures has been generally adopted ; and I am sorry to say, the clergy in general seem to be too fond of continuing this erroneous practice—the doctrine being taken for granted, or supposed to be undoubtedly true, the question has been uniformly begged, and the word of God has been wrested and made to bend to its support. Where no such doctrine was intended, or even thought of by the sacred writers, their figurative language has been seized and tortured into a supposed countenance of endless damnation. For this purpose, the *parables*, as also the most *obscure* and *hyperbolic* language in the Bible, and the word *hell*, are most frequently mentioned and mainly relied on. I shall here mention a few examples of this kind.

Wherever the phrase *hell*, or *hell fire*, occurs, it is at once taken for granted that nothing else could be intended but a lake of fire, burning with brimstone, in the invisible world. Whereas nothing could be more wide from the true meaning of the phrase. The Jews, particularly the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to whom this language was almost invariably addressed, when used by our Saviour, were as perfectly familiar with the place called *hell*, and with the sight of *hell fire*, as the inhabitants of the city of New-York are with what is called *the battery* ; for the most of them had been there and seen it as often. Hell, where it is translated from the Greek, *Gehenna*, signified literally, the *valley of Hinnom* near Jerusalem, where a fire was constantly kept burning, by which to consume the filth and dead carcasses carried out from the city. Again, where the word *hell* occurs as translated from the Greek word, *hades*, you make no distinction between it and the same word which is from *Gehenna*, carrying this as erroneously as the other into the eternal world, and making it signify *endless torment*. Whereas, the word *hades* literally signified *the grave*, as when Jacob, Job, and others prayed that they might go there ; but figuratively, mental darkness, trouble of mind, remorse of conscience, &c., which was what David alluded to when he said, “ the pains of



hell gat hold on me," and "thou hast delivered my soul from the lowest hell."

Where St. Peter says, 1 Epistle iv : 18, "if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" it is at once supposed that he is speaking of the *eternal* salvation of one part of the human family in another world, and means to imply that the "ungodly and the sinner" will be consigned to remediless and endless torment. But this is evidently a most preposterous conclusion; for the apostle, after speaking of the judgment of the "house of God," or of the body of believers, as having already commenced, and of the comparative severity of the judgment on believers, and that which was shortly to come on the unbelieving and persecuting Jews, speaks, not of the *eternal*, but of the *temporal* salvation, or deliverance of the disciples from the more dreadful calamities that would befall their ungodly persecutors, when the measure of their iniquities being full, wrath should come upon them to the uttermost, and such tribulation in the destruction of Jerusalem as had never been since there was a nation, no, nor ever should be again. See 1 Peter iv : 17, 18, and 2 Thess. i : 6-10, compared with Matt. xvi : 27, 28, xxiv : 3, 13-21, 30-35, and indeed the whole of Matthew xxiv and xxv; Mark viii : 38, and ix : 1; Luke ix : 26, 27, and other parallel texts, showing the time of the coming of the Son of man in judgment upon that generation, and the fulfilment of his denunciations, by the Roman army, the messengers of God's vengeance upon the wicked Jews.

The *parables* also, many of which were undoubtedly designed to apply to the same events above alluded to, (as for example, that of the house-holder and vineyard, and that of the marriage of the king's son, Matt. xxi and xxii,) are equally perverted from their original design, when carried out of this world into the invisible. The parable of the *wheat* and the *tares* is commonly explained so as to make it represent the righteous and the wicked here, and a final and eternal separation hereafter, when an infinite and endless difference will be made between the different classes of the human family. But the least reflection must satisfy a man of your discriminating mind, of the incorrectness of this exposition. For this would make the devil

the *creator* of a part of the human family,<sup>f</sup> inasmuch as it is said that the enemy that sowed the tares, is the devil ; and if this be admitted, it must likewise be granted that they are in duty bound to serve and obey the devil ; as the Scriptures direct, "children obey your parents in all things." If the devil is *really* the father of any, they are bound to obey him, and *him only*. God can have *no claim* whatever on their obedience, or service ! Not only does this exposition involve the above absurdity, but in conjunction with other parts of your scheme, it supposes that *wheat can be turned into tares, and tares into wheat* ; an instance of which would be a prodigy indeed in the natural world. Again, it confounds the *seed* with the *field*, which I have no doubt our Saviour meant to have kept distinct and separate. I have no doubt that Jesus here meant to treat of the same general subject that he had been treating of in the preceding parable of the *sower* and the *seed*, but to present it in a new light or different point of view. In the parable of the *sower and seed*, he exhibits a view of the obstacles that existed in the world, to the *introduction* or *establishment* of his Gospel among men, and in that of the *wheat and tares*, showed what difficulties would arise after it *was* introduced, in consequence of the introduction of *false doctrines* into the church "while men slept," or were off their guard. The field was the world of mankind ; the good seed was the Gospel of truth ; the tares were false doctrines sown by the enemy ; (as we are informed the devil is the father of lies ; ) the harvest was to be in the end of the age (not *kosmos*, world, but *aion*, age) or dispensation, or whenever the crop should become ripe for the harvest, and the false doctrines be clearly distinguishable from the true ; (which was not the case in their incipient stages ; ) then should the reapers, or messengers of the Gospel covenant, thrust in their sharp sickles and reap the harvest ; truth should be secured and saved, but the tares or false doctrines, should be bound in bundles by the strong cords of truth, and burned by the fire of free investigation ; notwithstanding the votaries of error and falsehood might wail, and gnash their teeth, and gnaw their tongues for pain ; as was the case with the church of Rome when Luther began to bind her tares in bundles and burn them ; and as is the case, even now, with most

of the clergy when some of their darling tenets or rank errors are brought to the fiery ordeal of strict and critical investigation. The doctrine of *endless misery* is one of those rank and pernicious tares, sown by the enemy of human happiness, which must be rooted out, however much the process may disturb or outrage the votaries of the error.

I here take the liberty of introducing to your notice, an extract from the writings of the learned, critical, and amiable Dr. Belsham, of London, on the doctrine of endless punishment. Though I may differ from him in some minute particulars, yet in the main I agree with him, and think his arguments conclusive and absolutely irresistible against endless misery, and in favor of the final happiness of all mankind. I hope, dear Sir, you will weigh well his arguments. They are the following:—

“Concerning the duration of future punishment, some have maintained, that the future sufferings of the wicked shall be eternal; others, that after a limited period, they will terminate in annihilation; and others, that the tendency and design of future punishment, is the reformation of the sufferer, who will ultimately be raised to perfect and everlasting felicity.

“The arguments in support of the dismal doctrine of the eternal duration of the future sufferings of the wicked, are the following: 1. Sin being committed against an infinite Being, is an infinite evil, and therefore worthy of infinite punishment.

“This is an unintelligible and gratuitous assumption; it supposes that God has some other end in view in punishing the wicked, than reformation and example—i. e. *that God is a tyrant*. The simple fact that mankind are limited in all their powers and faculties, is a sufficient refutation of the doctrine of infinite sin. It is hardly good logic to affirm, that a limited being, can perform an unlimited act, either good or evil. It would be the same as saying that the stream can rise higher than its fountain—which is a gross absurdity. We being limited in power, our acts, and their consequences must also be limited, or there is injustice somewhere.

“2. It urges that the doctrine of the everlasting sufferings of the wicked, is expressly revealed in the Scriptures,



and has been the prevailing belief of Christians of all ages.

“Answer 1. If this doctrine be true, then there is an infinite disproportion between the offence and the punishment—a finite being, for a finite offence, in a finite time, is punished with *infinite* and *unending* misery!!!

“2. If this doctrine be true, then God makes his creatures eternally miserable, for the commission of offences, which were the *foreknown*, and therefore the *necessary*, or *inevitable* result of the faculties which he has given them—of the circumstances in which he has placed them—of the frailty of that nature which he himself imparted—and the temptations to which, in the course of his providence, they have been exposed. That is, mankind act as he foresaw they would, and the consequence is, he torments them world without end.

“3. If this doctrine be true, and if it also be true that a majority of mankind are vicious characters, the Gospel revelation, so far from being *good tidings of great joy to all people*, would fill the world with terror and dismay. What! shall we be told, that the Gospel reveals the doctrine of the unutterable and never-ending torments of a large portion of the offspring of the Most High, and can we call it a message of gladness? Can we believe it to be that better covenant, of which the apostle speaks, if it brings to light ideas infinitely more cruel than those which urged a Nero or a Caligula on to deeds of darkness and blood?

“4. A doctrine so improbable in itself, so apparently inconsistent with all the rational and encouraging apprehensions of the divine attributes and government—so terrible in its consequences, is not to be admitted but upon evidence the most direct, unequivocal, and irresistible.

“5. The Scriptures are so far from teaching this formidable doctrine, that *there is not a single text* in any of the authentic, prophetic or apostolic writings, which can, by any fair and rational construction, be made even to express the idea. This will appear evident, if we pass to the examination of the supposed evidences from the Scriptures, of the doctrine which is now under consideration.

“Matt. xiii : 18. “It is better to enter into life halt or maimed, than having two hands, or two feet, to be cast into everlasting fire;” verse 9. “into hell fire,” literally,

the valley of Hinnom. See 2 Chron. xxviii: 3, also Jer. vii: 31, 32.

“These passages only express the permanence of the place, and of the instruments of punishment, *and are more applicable to a continual succession of criminals, than to individual sufferers.* The place was the valley of Hinnom, situated in the immediate vicinity of Jerusalem, where a fire was kept almost perpetually burning. Into this place the carcasses of beasts were thrown, upon which the worms preyed. So that ‘the worm died not, and the fire was not quenched,’ but kept burning night and day. The Saviour is here quoting the language of Isaiah, and is prophesying the temporal calamities about to fall upon the Jewish nation. The figure of fire was common to the writers of that period, when speaking of the judgments of God. In the closing verse of Isaiah it is said, ‘and they shall go forth,’ that is, from Jerusalem to the valley of Hinnom—‘and shall look upon the carcasses of the men (the Jews) that have transgressed against me; for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched, and they shall be an abhorring to all flesh.’ This must be allowed to refer to temporal judgments—for they were to look upon the carcasses of those who had transgressed against God—not to look upon them in another world, but in the valley of Hinnom, where the bodies of no less than six hundred thousand transgressors were cast during the siege by the Romans—‘where their worm died not, and their fire was not quenched.’ The passage does not mean that they were to be tormented in this place eternally, but that their dead bodies would be cast into this common receptacle of filth, to be consumed. See also Mark ix: 43-48. The prophet and the Saviour use almost precisely the same language—it was addressed to the same people—and meant the same thing, viz. their temporal destruction. We cannot suppose that the prophets intended one thing and Christ another, and that too entirely different, when they both use the same language.

“Mark iii: 29. ‘But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Spirit hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation.’ This text pronouncing eternal damnation upon those who shall blaspheme the Holy Spirit, is explained by the parallel passage in Matt. xii: 32. ‘It

shall not be forgiven him neither in this world (literally, *age*) nor in the world (*age*) to come.' The meaning is, that no provision is made for the recovery of those who reject not only the miracles of Christ, but the more public and splendid ones of the apostles after his resurrection. Their sin was not taken away—and they remained in the same unhappy condition in which Christianity found them. They have not forgiveness to the age.

"2 Thess. i: 9. 'Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power—in that day.' The apostle is here speaking of the tribulation which God should recompense to those that troubled them. These we find (see 1 Thess.) were the Jews who crucified the Lord Jesus—who pleased not God and were contrary to all men. They were to be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord. This could not be done by consigning them to hell; for David says, "if I ascend up to heaven thou art there; if I make my bed in hell *thou art there*." The presence of the Lord was at Jerusalem, and the temple was filled with the glory of his power. The Jews were to be destroyed as a nation with an everlasting destruction; were to be banished from Jerusalem where was the presence of the Lord, and from the temple where was the glory of his power.

"Matt. xxv: 46. 'And these shall go away into everlasting punishment.' The phrase 'everlasting punishment,' properly signifies everlasting correction; that is, a correction that will last as long as any thing remains to be corrected. It signifies suffering inflicted for the benefit of the sufferer; and if any conclusion on so important a point is to be drawn from verbal criticism, this text is most favorable to the doctrine of universal salvation.

I. The doctrine of universal salvation maintains that the wicked will suffer in a future life—that their sufferings will be remedial; that the design and tendency of them will be to purify the character from those vicious habits which have been contracted in the present state—that to this end they must necessarily be very severe, being intended to purify the character from those moral stains which would not yield to the discipline of this life; that consequently the intensity of their sufferings will be in



exact proportion to the depravity of their character, but that all will terminate in the total extinction of vice, and in the ultimate recovery of every individual to virtue and happiness.

“The arguments in favor of universal salvation, are  
1. The infinite goodness of God. The tokens of his goodness are displayed on every hand. Every object upon which we cast our eyes, proves that ‘the Lord is good and doeth good continually.’ Add to this that he is unchangeable, and we have a foundation for our hope, immutable as the promises of Jehovah.

II. The impartiality of that goodness. If God is impartial; has no respect to persons; if one of his creatures is made happy, the same benevolence that secures the happiness of one, will secure the happiness of all. But it may be objected that this argument proves too much. It would extend to brutes. We answer, that if the brutal creation have a ‘pleasing hope, a fond desire, a longing after immortality,’ then the argument does extend to them, and not without. If they have no wish, no desire for eternal life, then they lose nothing if it is not bestowed upon them.

“III. The perfect happiness of God is a kind of pledge that his creatures will be happy.

“IV. All, or by far the greater part of the evils we know are remedial, therefore by analogy all are so.

“V. God doth not keep his anger forever. In judgment he remembereth mercy; and his mercy endureth forever.

“VI. God is the Father and Benefactor of his creatures, he must therefore intend their ultimate happiness; and as he is all powerful and all wise, our final happiness is as certain as there is a sun in heaven.

“VII. The dispensations of God to the Jewish nation, are symbolical of his dispensations to mankind in general, and to every individual in particular. But the Jews are now rejected with a view to their being ultimately restored, so likewise are impenitent sinners.

“VIII. Facts plainly revealed, and admitted by all Christians, cannot be reconciled with the divine perfections, upon any other supposition but that of universal salvation.  
1. That the number of those who will escape future punishment is comparatively small, and the way to life narrow

and difficult. 2. That the wicked will be raised to suffering is a circumstance in the highest degree incredible, and contrary to all experience and analogy, and the reverse of every thing we should expect from the divine goodness, if they are not intended for ultimate happiness.\* 3. That these sufferings will be very severe and intense, and of indefinite duration. 4. That the sufferings of the wicked will be in exact proportion to their demerits and their crimes. All this is wise, and right, and even necessary, if the doctrine of universal salvation be true; but upon any other supposition those facts are utterly inexplicable and incredible. See Hartley on Man, Part II. c. iv. §5."

Thus far Dr. Belsham. In my next I shall resume the consideration of this subject. Yours, &c.

## LETTER XII.

*The same subject continued.*

DEAR SIR—In my last I pointed out to you the unscriptural character of this doctrine, and showed that it was only by a misapplication or perversion of the word of God that any texts could be made to favor it in the least. It was also shown to be entirely disproportioned to the sins of finite creatures, for a finite or limited time, as well as a variance with every noble and exalted and worthy conception of the divine Being. I wish now to call your attention again to the subject, and introduce some further considerations to your notice.

And in the first place, I wish to inquire what can be the motive in the infliction of endless punishment? Is the motive good? and will the good designed, ultimately be effected by it? I presume you maintain, with your other brethren, that if endless misery be inflicted on any, God is the being who will inflict it. And you doubtless hold that

\*The Doctor, it appears, believes in a state of disciplinary chastisement between death and the resurrection—but that none will be miserable after they are raised from the dead.

whatever God does, he does to some good end or other. What then, is the end designed by endless punishment? Is it, can it be, a good end? In answering this, or rather these queries, I will first avail myself of a laconic, but, as I conceive, lucid and irresistible argument employed by one of the most brilliant geniuses that shone during the last century; one of the brightest sons and ornaments of science and virtue that the kingdom of Great Britain ever produced.\* The following are his words:—

“I lay it down as an indubitable maxim, that whatsoever is done by a Being of divine attributes, is attended by his goodness, conducted by his wisdom, and accomplished by his power, *to a good end*. Now all possible good ends may be enumerated under three words—HONOR—PLEASURE—BENEFIT; and every one to whom good can accrue from endless punishment, must be either *punisher*, *punished*, or *fellow-creature* to the punished. Let us try every one of the former three to each of the latter.

“1. *The punisher*. Would it be greater HONOR to the *punisher* to have his creatures forever miserable than happy? I will venture to say by proxy, for *every* heart, No. Would it be greater PLEASURE? No. And BENEFIT, to him there can be none.

“2. *The punished*. Endless punishment can be neither *honor*, *pleasure*, nor *benefit* to them, though punishment on my scheme, (for the purpose of producing repentance and reformation,) will be of endless benefit.

“3. *The fellow-creature* to the punished. It will be as HONORABLE to them as to have one of their family hanged! If they have PLEASURE in it, they must have a diabolical heart, and by the just Searcher of hearts be committed to the place prepared for the devil and his angels. BENEFIT they can have none, except safety; and that is fully answered by the great gulf, by confinement till the reformation.

“As then unceasing torments can answer no possible good to any one in the universe, I conclude them to be neither the will nor the work of God. Could I suppose them, I must believe them to be inflicted by a wantonness and cruelty which words cannot express, nor heart conceive.”

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\* John Henderson, Esq.



Now, friend Aikin, I wish you to weigh the above argument candidly, examine it seriously, and see whether it can be refuted or gainsaid. It is not for argument's sake, nor for the sake of victory or mastery that I ask this of you—it is for the sake of ascertaining, exhibiting, and understanding the truth, and of testing a doctrine which I cannot believe you would still adhere to and promulgate, if you had ever examined it with sufficient attention, and brought it fully to the test of reason enlightened by revelation.

Did you ever think, Sir, of the dreadfulfulness of the doctrine—of the awfulness of the idea? Endless misery! endless misery!! interminable torments! immortal agonies!! infinite and unceasing woes!! inflicted too by a being whose name, whose nature, whose very *essence is love*!! Clergymen of your order, not unfrequently say, “no tongue can describe, no pencil paint, no thought conceive, or mind imagine, the infinite and unending torments of the damned.” And hence, the most terrific and awful descriptions of hell and damnation (though they fall infinitely short of the reality) are supposed to approach nearest to the truth, and of course are considered the best specimens of evangelical preaching. Hell is uncapt—the imagination is upon the stretch—the sulphurous stench is smelt—the flames are heard to flash around their devoted victims—their groans and shrieks are distinctly heard—the Almighty is seen in flaming vengeance—the pale victims of his wrath (who were forced into life without their knowledge or consent, surrounded with temptations while here, and in consequence of the frailty of that nature God had given them, yielded to those temptations as Deity foresaw, or rather decreed they should) are thrust down—down—down to the dark abodes of eternal despair—crushed with the weight of Almighty vengeance—tossed on the billowy surges—rolling in the liquid lava of hell's molten sea—racked with unutterable torment—shrieking in hopeless despair!! There, days, months, years, and ages will circle away—ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands of years and of ages will roll over their heads; this number multiplied by all the stars that fill the skies; this by all the sands on the sea shore; this by all the drops of water in the ocean; this by every spire of

grass that grows when summer's radiance gilds the vale ; this by every leaf that flutters in the breeze ; and this last number multiplied by all the figures that would wind the earth from pole to pole ; and after having endured all this long and inconceivable series of ages on ages, of dire and ineffable torment, multiplied thrice ten thousand times into itself, these wretched victims will be but just *beginning to begin* their sufferings—but just entering on the portals of misery—will have to endure the same number of ages of torment, over and over, again ; and still the dark vaults of their prison, while echoing with their groans, will reverberate with the awful sentence, “ *Eternity—ETERNITY—ETERNITY of misery is before you !* ” O my God ! and what is all this misery and protracted suffering for ? Is it to do God any good ? No. Is it to do the saints in heaven any good ? No ; for they must be worse than demons to derive pleasure from such a source. Is it to do any being in the whole universe any good ? No. What then is it for ? Why, to glut the vindictive wrath, and satiate the unmerciful cruelty of—*an Almighty tyrant ?* We have heard of the cruelty of a Nero, a Caligula, and a Robespierre, and our blood has been chilled in its veins at the recital ; but what was the cruelty of these, compared to what this doctrine ascribes to the Father of the universe ? We have heard the soul-chilling tales of barbarous cruelties inflicted by the savages of the Western wilds ; but what are the terrors and tortures of the Indian's tomahawk and scalping knife, to the terrors and tortures of a never-ending hell ? We have heard of the almost incredible cruelties of Mahommedans, Turks, Arabs, and Algerines, of Cannibals and Inquisitors, and we have heard of the slow flames that consumed Michael Servetus : but what are these cruelties, barbarities, and outrages—what are *all* the cruelties and sufferings inflicted and endured, throughout the wide world, from the morning of time to the present period, when compared with what you hold the *Father of all mercies* and *God of all grace* will inflict on his *own offspring*, in hell ? They are nothing, Sir, and less than nothing in the comparison. They are, as of necessity they must be, of short duration—they are soon ended at longest : but the sufferings of your hell are never to end ! They are to be ever increasing, and never ceasing ;

and their unhappy subjects are to be ever destroying and never destroyed, ever dying and never dead ! ever burning and never consumed !! God is to exert his own omnipotence to keep them in being, that he may ever have something to be angry at, and ever have the pleasure of tormenting them : although they never injured him, nor had it in their power so to do—for “ if thou sinnest what doest thou against him ? or if thy transgressions be multiplied, what doest thou unto him ? Thy wickedness may hurt a man as thou art ; and thy righteousness may profit the son of man.” No mercy can ever reach them in that dismal abode—not even mercy enough to strike them from the scale of existence, and terminate their sufferings by annihilation.

Such is the character of the being you profess to worship ; whose cruelty as far exceeds the greatest cruelty ever exercised by the unfeeling tyrants of earth, as his *power* transcends theirs, or as *eternity* exceeds in duration the *short life* of a mortal here ; as far indeed as *infinite* exceeds *finite* ; so that the greatest earthly cruelty is not even a shadow of the cruelty of your God !

But, Sir, can you worship in spirit—can you truly love such a being as this ? I answer unhesitatingly, No : it is impossible ! you may pretend to worship him—you may *profess* to love him, through a dread of his vengeance if you do not ; as the sycophant crouches to his haughty lord, and the slave to his cruel master ; but it cannot be the true, the free, the unconstrained and sincere homage and affection of the soul. True love to God is not constrained by the fear of hell : it is free and voluntary ; and the person who possesses it is able to say in the language of the apostle, “ We love him *because* he *first* loved us.” But such a God as your creed embraces cannot be truly loved by any soul in the universe. I *could* not love him if I *would*, and, I will here add, I *would not* love him if I *could* ; for the plain reason that such a being would be totally unworthy of the love of a rational creature. But blessed be the God of heaven, no such being exists (as the God of infinite hatred and malice embraced in your creed) except in the bewildered brains of deluded mortals, and the wild chimeras of men’s deceived imaginations.

The God that *does exist*, is a Being of infinite love and benevolence, good unto all, and his tender mercies over all



his works, kind to the unthankful and the evil, making his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sending his rain on the just and on the unjust : and inasmuch as this is his character now, and he is unchangeable, he will eternally remain the same benevolent Being. *God is love* : and he can no more cease to love a being that he has created, than he can cease to be God. If his children are sinful and disobedient, he punishes them, as a good earthly father punishes his children, for their good, for their profit, that they may be partakers of his holiness. But as endless punishment could not possibly be for their profit or benefit, this could never be embraced in his plan of moral government or discipline.

He loves his enemies, blesses those that curse him, does good to those that hate him ; and hence, Jesus commands his followers to do the same, that they may imitate their Father in heaven. But suppose mankind were to imitate the God which your creed holds up—were to hate and torment with merciless cruelty, all that they conceived to be their enemies, all that did not conform to their standard in all things—What would be the consequences in society ? For an answer to this question, look to the enormities, the cruelties, and the unmerciful persecutions that have been practiced by the believers in a tyrannical God, and the doctrine of endless misery !

Look to the oceans of blood that have been spilled, the millions on millions that have been slain by the persecuting advocates of an endless hell. And say too, whether they did not act consistently with their belief, and in conformity with the character of *their* God ? Did not John Calvin act perfectly consonant with his doctrine, when he caused Servetus to be burned at the stake ? He conceived it his duty to hate whom he believed God hated : and as he believed God would burn Servetus to all eternity in the future world, he doubtless thought he could assist the Lord, by beginning the good work of burning here on earth ! We find that wherever persecution has raised her cruel standard, whether in the old or new world, the Eastern or Western continent, the persecutors have been staunch advocates for endless misery. This was the case in our own country with those who hung Quakers, banished Baptists, and practiced many other cruelties in the early settlement of our country.

But as the liberal laws and institutions of our country will not now allow such persecutions to be carried on; as the improvements of the age are constantly advancing; as more enlarged and liberal views of the divine Being are now generally entertained; and as Christianity is becoming more and more disencumbered of those corruptions and false theories that were palmed upon her during the dark ages of popery, and to which many protestants still adhere with great pertinacity; from all these meliorating causes, the practice of professing Christians has been greatly altered for the better; their habits, lives and hearts are much improved; so that I verily believe, that with a vast majority of those who profess to believe in the doctrine of endless misery, their hearts are far better than their heads; or rather, I will say, than their creeds. They cannot be so barbarous and cruel, as to act in accordance with what their creeds ascribe to the Deity. And hence, I think it high time that your creed, which embraces the doctrine of endless damnation and infinite cruelty, a creed which is too wicked and barbarous to live by in the present age, was abandoned and given up forever.

Yours, &c.

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### LETTER XIII.

*On the doctrine of Fallen Angels and a Personal Devil.*

DEAR SIR—When I wrote my last letter to you I did not intend so long a lapse of time should intervene between that and this epistle, as I now find has actually rolled away. I trust, however, your goodness will pardon the long delay, when I assure you it has not been for the want of inclination on my part, to pursue the subject of discussion, but from the multiplicity, variety and pressing nature of my avocations. The topics, also, yet remaining to be discussed, will possess the same interest, and hold the same importance now, that they would have done at any former period.

The common doctrine of the fall, total depravity, election and reprobation, and endless misery, which have already been examined, and, as is believed, fully refuted, are considered as deeply interesting, when viewed in connexion with their advocates, influence and bearing on society and the happiness of men, as any doctrines can be ; yet the interest these doctrines are allowed to possess, will not detract from the importance of others now to be examined. In further pursuing my design, I shall first call your attention to the common doctrine of *fallen angels and a personal devil*.

In order to come directly at the subject in hand, and treat it fairly, I will first state the doctrine as it is believed you, in common with other orthodox Presbyterians, hold it.

The doctrine, so far as can be gathered from the preaching and writings of your order, is as follows : Not long previous to the creation of this earth and its first inhabitants, the devil, who was then an angel of the highest order in heaven, took offence at being commanded to worship the Son of God, rebelled against the Majesty of heaven, seduced a vast multitude of the heavenly host to join his standard, and after a long and desperate contest, was finally overcome by the allegiate powers, hurled from the battlements of heaven with his apostate associates, and doomed to the liquid flames and burning torments of endless damnation in hell—that this open rebel, (now an arch-fiend of hell,) with his subordinate wicked companions, found his way to this world, seduced our first parents to sin, and now tempts mankind, and leads the way in all crimes and iniquities that are perpetrated in all parts of the earth.

How this rebel monster escaped from his chains and confinement in hell, and obtained footing in this world ; and how it happens that he is now the principal *prisoner and keeper, victim and tormentor, subject and sovereign* in hell, while at the same time he is roaming at large through the whole earth and tempting, at the same moment of time in the four quarters thereof, hundreds of millions of human beings, is not explained ; nor are any efforts made by the believers in the theory, to explain it. But to call it in question, would be, in their estimation, almost as heinous an offence as to deny the existence even of the Supreme Being himself.



I am sensible, Sir, of the tenacity with which such strange, mystical, inexplicable and monstrous doctrines are held by the ignorant multitude, when once they get a footing, have long been cherished, and are advocated by the clergy in whom they repose implicit and almost unlimited confidence. But it is lamentable to see men in your station, and of your enlightened and well cultivated mind, still countenancing and upholding such a monstrous theory as this, which should have been discarded centuries ago, and laid aside with other corruptions in the time of the reformation. The doctrine was evidently begotten by Paganism, brought forth by the school of Plato, (in which Pagan mysticisms were artfully blended with a part of Christianity,) and matured in the poetic fancy of John Milton, allowing for the slight variations and modifications it underwent in the intermediate and subsequent stages of its existence. I have no doubt, however, of the fact, that many honest Christians really believe this doctrine is taught in the Bible, and hence, they receive it as a Scripture doctrine, as they do many others that are merely traditional. Having heard it from their infancy, both from parents and ministers, their ideas of it are as old as any of their ideas—as ancient as their memories—and they really think they have got them from the perusal of their Bible: when in fact the Bible neither teaches nor mentions any such doctrine.

To satisfy yourself, Sir, that no such doctrine is taught in the Scriptures, I wish you to take your Bible and try to establish, from its positive testimony, either of the following particulars: 1. That the devil was ever a holy angel. If so, 2. That he was ever commanded and refused to worship the Son. 3. That any holy angels in heaven ever rebelled against their Maker, or were ever cast out of heaven into hell. 4. That they were ever doomed to endless misery there. 5. That these once holy, but now wicked angels, or the devil their leader, or any other personal being once in heaven, now roam through the whole earth tempting mankind to sin. I am satisfied, if you make the experiment, that you will be convinced, not only that the whole theory is not taught in the Bible, but that *neither* of these particulars can be found inculcated in that sacred volume.

I know of but four texts of Scripture that can be thought by any rational person to resemble in the least, either of the foregoing particulars : and these, on examination, will be found not to support the one, but to oppose some other item in this theory. They are the following : viz. Isa. xiv : 12-15 ; Rev. xii : 7-9 ; 2 Pet. ii : 4 ; and Jude 6. The text in Isaiah so evidently relates to the king of Babylon, that no man in his senses will attempt to apply it to any other being or subject. The one in Revelation is so obviously figurative, from the whole context, and by the universal consent of all good critics, that I have no apprehension you will risk your reputation in defending a different view of it. From the highly figurative manner in which the words *devil*, *angels*, *heaven*, and *earth* are used in the Apocalypse, and from the connexion in which this text stands, it will appear obvious, I think, that the devil and his angels there spoken of, were the Jewish power and those who executed it in persecuting the Christians ; and that the “heaven” out of which they were cast, was the holy land, or Palestine, and “the earth” into which they were cast, was, the Gentile nations whither they were dispersed abroad. If you think the text is to be understood literally, then be so good as to reconcile the fact here stated, that the devil and his angels were cast out of heaven “*into the earth*,” with that part of your theory that maintains they were cast out of heaven *into hell*. You will find it impossible to reconcile the text, if taken literally, with your theory.

The text in Peter reads thus : “For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness to be reserved unto judgment—.” Possibly you will say, this text unequivocally supports the doctrine of fallen angels. Grant that it does ; what follows ? Why, that these angels cannot be the devil and his host that are so much talked of by the Orthodox. For the devil and his host are supposed to have been at once consigned to the fierce torments of endless damnation in hell ; but those that Peter mentions were said to be *RESERVED unto judgment*. Again, those that you believe in, are supposed to be roaming abroad through the whole earth deceiving and leading mankind astray ; but these are said to be “delivered into *chains* of dark-

ness"—"reserved—" so that they cannot now be roaming abroad and deceiving men. I wish, dear Sir, you would take your Bible and examine this subject, text and context, with care, and you will discover that Peter does not advance these words by way of *assertion*, nor for the purpose of *informing* his brethren any thing new on the subject; but incidentally introduces the idea, as though it were already well understood by his brethren, for the purpose of drawing a moral reflection from the subject. "For IF," says he, "God spared not the angels that sinned," &c.—"the Lord knoweth" [here is the moral reflection he draws] "how to deliver the godly out of temptation, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished."—Here then is the point towards which his previous observations were directed—that God was able to deliver the godly out of temptation, and reserve the wicked unto the day of judgment to be punished. The apostle does not inform, who these angels were, what their crime consisted in, nor when nor where it was committed. You are aware that the word angel does not necessarily designate a *spirit*, but literally signifies a *messenger*, or one *sent*. Who or what these messengers or angels were, we are not informed, either by Peter or any other inspired writer. As it is obvious, from the apostle's language, that those to whom he wrote perfectly understood him, it must be supposed either that the account of these angels was contained in some apocryphal book well known to them, but not now in existence, or that these angels were some messengers or persons who lived in the days of the apostles, and were personally known to them. Some have supposed that they were the spies formerly sent by Moses to survey the land of Canaan; but there is nothing but conjecture in favor of the supposition. It is not an unreasonable supposition to suppose these angels or messengers had been among the first promulgators of the Gospel, and engaged in preaching the word unto their fellow-sinners; and had apostatized from the faith and profession of Christianity, in consequence of which [according to Jude] they "kept not their first estate, but left their own habitations," or stations in their office, and were "cast down" from their moral elevation in the Gospel kingdom, to the lowest depths of moral depravity—confined in chains of mental darkness—"shut up



unto the faith;" (Gal. iii: 23.) The Gospel was "hid to them—its glorious light shown not unto them;" (2 Cor. iv: 3, 4.) It being "impossible—to renew them again unto repentance, seeing they crucified unto themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame;" (Heb. vi: 4-6.) Having "sinned wilfully after they had received the knowledge of the truth," there remained for them "a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation which should devour the adversaries." (Heb. x: 26, 27.) Thus they were cast down to hell; (see Isa. xiv: 12-15; Ps. ix: 17, xviii: 5, cxvi: 3; Jonah ii: 1-6; Matt. xi: 23;) and "reserved in" those "chains" of mental "darkness, unto the judgment of the great day," which great day of judgment was then fast approaching, when "wrath should come upon them to the uttermost"—when there was to be "great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be"—when they, (i. e. these apostates,) with the unbelieving Jews, were to be "punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power," or in their dispersed and wretched condition, away from the holy land and the beautiful temple where "the presence of the Lord and the glory of his power" had for so many ages dwelt. "For if the righteous" (that is, the disciples who continued "faithful to the end" in obedience to their Master) "scarcely be saved," (i. e. escape from Jerusalem with their lives,) "where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" i. e. where shall these apostate disciples, with their companions in guilt, the persecuting Jews, appear, but in the endurance of all those dreadful calamities to be experienced by that wicked nation, when the vials of wrath which they had "treasured up against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God," should be poured out upon them?—These threatened judgments were actually executed upon that generation; as our Lord said, Matt. xxiv: 34, after describing the signs by which the disciples would know and be able to avoid these "days of vengeance." "Verily I say unto you, this generation shall not pass till all these things be fulfilled."

The text in Jude is but a repetition of the same ideas conveyed by Peter, with a trifling variation in the form of

expression. And the view taken of the text in Peter seems to be further confirmed and illustrated by this text and its context in Jude. The apostle does not inform his brethren of any thing they did not already know; but says, "I will therefore *put you in remembrance, though ye once knew this,*" &c. The facts were familiar to them, and seem to have been under their own observation. "For there are certain *men,*" he says, [not fallen *spirits,*] "crept in unawares, who were before of old, ordained to this condemnation: *ungodly men,* turning the grace of God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ." He then proceeds to put them "in remembrance" of these men, and the judgments that awaited them, and as a sample of these judgments, cites them to the case of the ancient Jews who trusted not in God, after they had been delivered from Egypt: the crimes of these ungodly men in his day in "turning the grace of God into lasciviousness" were similar to those of the ancients, and so would be their punishment. "And even the angels" (or some of the messengers for preaching the Gospel) "which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitations (or offices) he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day." He hath given them over to the perpetual bondage of their own blindness of mind and hardness of heart, to be reserved under that darkness till their "judgment, which now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation which slumbereth not," come upon them. The apostle then introduces the case of Sodom and Gomorrah, as a case in point further to illustrate the dreadful overthrow which awaited these apostates and filthy dreamers, who "defile the flesh, despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities." Thus, as those cities suffered "the vengeance of eternal fire," which fire continued to burn under and around the dead sea, where those cities stood, for many ages after their overthrow, as a memento of divine justice, so the vengeance to be taken on that wicked generation should continue to be manifest for many generations after it, as we see it is even at this day.

I shall defer the further consideration of this subject till my next. In the mean time, believe me, Rev. Sir,

Yours with sincere respect.

## LETTER XIV.

*The same subject continued.*

REV. and DEAR SIR—Having shown in my last that the principal texts of Scripture relied on for proof of the doctrine of fallen angels, give no countenance to that strange notion, I shall now proceed further to notice the doctrine, and particularly to consider the popular ideas of a personal devil, and of his having once been an angel in heaven.

And here let me ask, if the popular doctrine be true, is it not strange that none of the sacred writers have asserted it, either directly or indirectly? How is it to be accounted for, if the devil be a fallen angel, that no account is given of him in the books of Moses, nor no mention made of any such being either by the prophets or by any of the Old Testament patriarchs, and that none of those distinguished servants of the Most High, had any knowledge of such a being? We should naturally suppose, if an exalted angel in heaven had rebelled, seduced others to rebel, and been driven out of heaven, Moses would have related the fact, and especially if it took place about the time of the creation of this world, and mankind were in danger of being ensnared by his subtle wiles. But Moses is perfectly silent about any such event. Nor does he or any other Old Testament writer mention the creation of the devil, or inform mankind that any such being existed, or that they were in any danger from his temptations; so that if such a being, so dangerous to the peace, safety and happiness of mankind, really exist, God suffered the whole human race to remain totally ignorant of the fact, at least four thousand years. How will you account for these things? How will you exonerate the Deity from the charge of being the enemy of his children, by suffering them so long to remain ignorant of their worst enemy and greatest danger?

Perhaps you will say, we have accounts of the devil in the Old Testament, sufficiently clear and definite for the instruction and admonition of all who read the Bible, particularly in the account of the temptation and sin of our



first parents. But, Sir, what says the account of the temptation and sin of our first parents, as given in the book of Genesis, concerning a personal devil? Nothing. What says that account about a fallen angel? Nothing. Neither the one nor the other of these names is mentioned. We are informed there, that "Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every *beast of the field*."—"Now the *serpent* was more subtle than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And *he* (that is, the serpent) said unto the woman," &c. Would this account suggest to the common reader the idea of any other being than one of the *beasts of the field* (the most subtle, to be sure) which the Lord God had made, and to which Adam gave the name of *serpent*? Certainly no other being is mentioned or alluded to in the account given by Moses: and when Adam is accused of eating the forbidden fruit, he lays the blame on the woman, and the woman on the *serpent*, not on a wicked *spirit* called the *devil*, nor a *fallen angel*. And God pronounces the punishment on the serpent, not on a fallen angel. The sentence is, "upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life"—a curious sentence truly, to be pronounced on a *fallen angel*!

Should you be disposed to ask whether I understand this account literally, and suppose a real *serpent* was intended, I answer, I should as soon believe a real serpent, literally a snake, was intended, as, that a spirit, once a *holy angel in heaven* was meant. But I understand by the *serpent*, that *lust* or *desire* is personified. It was the *desire*, no doubt, that tempted Eve to eat the fruit; and this desire was probably increased by the prohibition. The mere desire for the fruit was not sinful, but the yielding to that desire contrary to the commandment, was sin. Paul says, "I had not known sin but by the law; for I had not known lust except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet." Rom. vii: 7. James says, "lust, when it hath conceived, bringeth forth sin." The serpent, from its subtlety, was selected by Moses as a fit emblem by which to represent the ensnaring nature of lust and the "deceitfulness of sin." And certainly it was as suitable a figure for this purpose, as the lion is to represent ferocity, the lamb meekness, and the dove harmlessness. The sentence pronounced on the

serpent denotes the mean, low, grovelling nature, propensity and destination of lust.

Having seen that the account of our first parents' sin in Eden, contains nothing in relation to a personal devil, or a fallen angel, let us now see if the idea of such a being is any where suggested in the Old Testament. And here I remark that the word *devil* is not *once* found in all the books of the Old Testament. The word *devils* (in the plural number only) occurs four times; and by quoting the texts we shall be able to ascertain what kind of devils they were, or whether they resembled the Orthodox devil of this age. "And they shall no more offer their sacrifices unto *devils* after whom they have gone a whoring." Lev. xvii: 7. "They sacrificed unto *devils*, not to God; to gods whom they knew not, to *new gods that came newly up*, [devils appear to have been something *new* at that age, so long after the sin and fall of man,] whom your fathers feared not." Deut. xxxii: 17. "And he [Jeroboam] ordained him priests for the high places, and for the *devils*, and for the calves which *he had made*." 2 Chron. xi: 15. [His devils were probably manufactured with as much facility, and of similar materials, as the mechanic manufactures his wares.] "Yea, they sacrificed their sons and their daughters unto *devils*." Ps. cvi: 37.

Should you now resort to the word *satan*, a convertible mode of expression for *devil*, and contend that, because it is said, "when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, *satan* came also among them;" therefore the popular doctrine of a personal devil is supported by the Old Testament; I would remind you that so singular a doctrine as this needs some further support than a few isolated expressions taken from a book of allegories. And further, if we are warranted in believing in a distinct, personal evil spirit, because we read of *satan* here, then we must allow that Christ chose two such evil beings for his apostles: for one of them he called a *devil*, and another *satan*.

If, however, you are disposed to consider the book of Job as a record of historical facts, instead of an allegory, I think you will be led to believe, after a careful examination of the book, that the idea of *satan's* being engaged in, and the author of, Job's afflictions, or the afflictions of any

of the human family, was introduced rather to refute it and show the inhabitants of that age its falsity, than to establish it. The reasons for this conclusion are obvious.—The scenes of the book of Job are laid in the land of Uz, where Paganism prevailed, and particularly the philosophy of the Persian Magi. The Magian system of philosophy maintained that there were two beings in existence, the one good, and the other bad; the one the author of light and of all good; the other the author of darkness and of all evil; the good being they called *Ormudz*, (in the Greek *Oromasdes*,) the evil being *Ahraman*, (in Greek *Arimanius*.) *Ormudz* was supposed to be the author of all prosperity and happiness, and *Ahraman* of all misfortunes, calamity and misery. This theory is introduced in the commencement of the book of Job—the *Ahraman* of the Magi is here called *satan*, or adversary, and supposed to be the author of all Job's calamities and sufferings. But is this supposition allowed to stand uncontroverted and unrefuted? Certainly not: for so far from allowing that *Ahraman* or *satan* was the author of his sufferings, Job uniformly ascribes them to Jehovah, to the good God, and not to an evil one. He says, “the *Lord* gave, and the *LORD* hath taken away, (not *satan* hath taken away,) blessed be the name of the *Lord*.” When his wife desired him to curse God and die, Job replies, “Thou speakest as one of the foolish (i. e. the Heathen or Persian) women speaketh. What! shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?” Thus, throughout the whole book, not only Job, but his friends and all the characters or personages introduced, ascribe the calamities he suffered in the loss of his possessions, and the sore affliction from his biles, not to the Persian evil god, nor the modern Christian's devil or *satan*, but to *God alone*. To him alone, all his prosperity and all his adversity is ascribed. See Job i: 21, iv: 9, v: 17, 18, vi: 4, 5, vii: 20, 21, viii: 3, 4, ix: 16–18, x: 2, xvi: 11–15, 19, 21, and xlii: 10–12. Thus the whole book goes to refute the notion that an evil being had any thing to do with the afflictions of Job. And certainly nothing is said here about any *fallen angel*.

Again: If *satan* be the name of an evil being, a fallen angel, is it not strange that in the first instance where it is used in the Bible, it is used in the *feminine* gender, (as a



Hebrew noun,) and applied to a *well*? See Genesis xxvi : 21. "And they digged another well, and strove about that : and he called the name of it *Sitnah*." The signification as given in the margin, is *hatred*. The next passage where it occurs, is in Numbers xxii : 22, 23. "And God's anger was kindled, because he (Balaam) went : and the angel of the Lord stood in the way for an adversary (satan) against him. Behold I went out *to withstand thee*, because thy way is perverse before me." In the above two verses the word *satan* occurs twice in the original : in the first it is rendered adversary, and in the second "*to withstand thee*." And what is worthy of your particular notice, it is not applied to an evil fallen spirit, but to the *good angel of the Lord*. By examining 1 Sam. xxix : 4 ; 2 Sam. xix : 22, and 1 Kings v : 4, xi : 14, 23, 25, you will find the word rendered *adversary*, is in the original, *satan* ; and is applied to David, to the sons of Zeruah, to Hadad, to Rezon, and others. In Ezra iv : 6, the word *satan* is rendered *accusation*. In Ps. xxxviii : 20, lxxi : 13, and cix : 4, the word *satan* occurs in the plural number, and is in each place rendered *adversaries*.

But I need not multiply quotations and references to places where the word *satan* occurs in the original of the Old Testament. Your own good sense and acquaintance with the Scriptures, must satisfy you that the word *satan* signifies simply *an adversary*, and is generally applied to men who sustain the character of adversaries. And had king James' translators rendered it thus in all places, or adopted any uniform word by which to translate it, there could have been no difficulty in every English reader's understanding it. But by rendering it by different words in English, sometimes *adversary*, sometimes *to withstand*, sometimes *accusation*, and sometimes using the word *satan*, *untranslated*, they have introduced confusion into the mind of the common reader, and by the magic of clerical art, a super-human, but fallen and wicked spirit, has been conjured up, and favored with a conspicuous place in the creeds of men, when in fact no such being was known or even thought of by the writers of the inspired volume.

Having seen that the Old Testament furnishes no evidence of a personal devil, under any name, or of a fallen angel, who was once in heaven, but now an arch-fiend, tempt-

ing, deceiving, and leading mankind astray, I will now call your attention to the New Testament, and see whether that affords any evidence of such a theory.

And here it is proper to remark, that there are various words in the original Greek which are rendered *devil* in our version. And these words are as different in their original signification as are the words *enemy* and *lunatic*. Not only so, but the *same* word is frequently rendered by *different* English words in our common version.

The word *diabolos*, most commonly rendered devil, and more properly so than any other word in the Greek, is compounded of *dia*, through, and *ballo*, to dart, throw, strike, or stab; and signifies slanderer, accuser, or enemy—one *who stabs with an accusation*. This word is applied to women, in the plural number, 1 Tim. iii: 11. "Even so must their wives (i. e. the deacons' wives) be grave, not *slanderers*, (*diabolous*, or *devils*,) sober, faithful in all things." Here the apostle evidently supposed it possible for the deacons' wives to become *devils*, or he would not have admonished them against it. Is it possible he could have feared they would become *fallen angels*?

The Greek word *daimon* and *daimonion*, are nearly or quite synonymous, and are generally in the New Testament used to denote lunatics or insane persons, or the madness or mental disorders with which they were afflicted. One or the other of these words (and not *diabolos*) is used in each of the following passages: Matt. viii: 28–31, ix: 32, xi: 18, xv: 22, xvii: 18; Mark v: 15, 16, 18, vii: 26–30; Luke iv: 33, 35, viii: 29, ix: 42, xi: 14; John vii: 20, viii: 48–52, x: 20, 21. In most of these passages it must appear perfectly obvious, that being possessed of devils (*daimon*, or *daimonion*) can mean nothing more nor less than being afflicted with some mental or bodily disease. In some of them it is particularly so defined. Matt. xvii: 15, the subject is expressly called "*lunatic*." In Luke xi: 14, the subject was evidently dumb; and the dumbness was the only devil or evil of which he was possessed.

The Jews, at the time of our Saviour's advent, and for several generations before, appear to have believed in the existence of evil spirits, or demons, and that to these demons nearly all the mental and corporeal diseases of men

were to be ascribed. Our Saviour, however, never taught nor countenanced this opinion. Neither did the Jews derive it from any of their sacred writings; (for it was not taught in them;) but from the Heathen nations with whom they associated. The Heathens had deified the departed spirits of their heroes and dead men, and divided them into good and evil, supposing they were allowed to visit men in this world, and bless or torment them, according to their pleasure, or the permission of the good and evil powers under which they were respectively commissioned to act. The ignorant multitude would as readily be induced to believe this theory, as our superstitious forefathers were to believe in witchcraft, or the absolute existence of witches and wizzards. And not only so, but the very subjects themselves, when visited with any malady, would immediately ascribe it to some evil demon. The Heathen Mythology exhibits a vast multitude and variety of gods and demons, good and bad. The Greeks alone had a catalogue, it is said, of thirty thousand. The Jews, though differing in some of their notions of the demons, yet fell in with their general system in regard to evil angels or demons. Though the Jews believed in the existence and influence of these demons or evil spirits, they do not appear to have *deified* them quite as much as the Heathens did, from whom they derived their theory. Hence, our translators, being aware of this fact, have in one instance so far departed from their general rule as to accommodate our version to the Heathen notion of demons, where the Heathens were represented as the speakers. Acts xvii: 18. When certain philosophers of the Epicureans and of the Stoics encountered Paul, at Athens, "some said, What will this babbler say? other some, He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods, (*daimonion*,) because he preached unto them Jesus and the resurrection." Here our translators have metamorphosed their *devils*, or what they usually translate devils, into *gods*.

There is no difficulty in understanding all those passages where *daimon* and *daimonion* occur, when the origin of them is consulted, and the circumstance taken into consideration, that in Scripture phraseology there are frequent occurrences of *metonymy* and *prosopopœia*, by which demoniacs or persons possessed, are put for the demons or



maladies by which they are possessed, and, *vice versa*, the demons or evils put for the persons afflicted with them. See Matt. viii : 31, 32 ; Mark v : 10, 12. In the last verses mentioned we find the *man possessed*, beseeching Jesus in one verse, and the *devils* beseeching him in the other ; by which the biblical critic will at once perceive that the *man possessed* besought Jesus that the madness with which he was afflicted might enter into and take possession of the herd of swine. Mr. Harwood's liberal translation of the 12th verse, reads thus : " The madman, uttering such wild extravagant things as persons disordered in their intellects do, desired that the demons which were in him might enter into the swine."

A view of some of the principal texts of Scripture where *diabolos* occurs in the original, will constitute the theme of my next, with some concluding remarks on the subject in general.

Respectfully Yours.

## LETTER XV.

*The same subject continued.*

REV. SIR—I shall now proceed, as proposed in my last, to consider some of the principal passages of Scripture where the word *diabolos* occurs, and to make some further general remarks on the idea of fallen angels and a personal devil.

The first passage (and a principal one relied on in support of your theory) I shall notice, is Matt. iv : 1-12 ; and its parallels, Mark i : 12, 13 ; and Luke iv : 1-14, where we are furnished with an account of our Saviour's temptation. It is proper to remark that the words *diabolos*, or devil, and *satan*, are here used synonymously, or to signify the same thing. That a personal devil, or evil being was here intended or represented, will, I conceive, be contended for on no other ground than that this account is to be understood *literally*. For if the literality of the account be once given up, I cannot conceive how it will be possible

for you to raise an argument in favor of the personality of the devil, satan, or tempter, here described. And in my opinion the literal interpretation of it is not only attended with difficulties hard to surmount, but with the most monstrous absurdities, such as are even shocking to common sense.

Taken literally, the account supposes the devil to be the greatest fool in existence—to appear in *propria persona* in presence of that illustrious personage whom he knew to be the Son of God, and offer temptations to him which could proceed only from an evil being! With what prospect of success could he thus openly and undisguisedly assail the Son of God? The feeblest virtue would resist such temptations at once, and surely come off victorious, knowing that the tempter was the devil himself.

The learned Mr. Farmer, whose remarks will have some weight with you, when speaking relative to a literal interpretation of the passage, says, “In the first temptation in which Jesus is solicited to turn stones into bread,” nothing is promised on the part of satan to gain his consent; the request of an implacable enemy, when no advantage attends it, being in itself a reason for rejecting it. But satan defeats his own temptation by asking an useless favor.

“While the foe betrays great folly in the first temptation, he supposes Christ to be actuated by still greater in the second. The people on seeing Jesus throwing himself from the top of the temple, might conclude that he was the Son of God. But he knew that the tempter had it in his power to lead them, to draw the same conclusion of himself. Satan also would throw himself down unhurt; and his miraculous preservation would prove him, as well as Jesus, to be the Son of God. Nay, he might claim the superiority; for it was a greater exertion of power to convey him from the wilderness to the top of the temple, than in sustaining his fall to the court below. What inducement, then, could Christ have for a compliance with the proposal suggested? Would he be disposed to gratify satan by doing an act at his mere suggestion? Was he to acquire any glory or advantage to himself? No; on the contrary, he would have incurred the infamy of having entered the lists with the devil without having acquired any superiority over him.

“With regard to the third temptation, the Son of God knew that the father of lies had not the empire of the world at his disposal, and that he therefore promised what he had not power to perform. Such a promise was rather an insult than a temptation, and was calculated only to provoke scorn or resentment. Could the devil then hope by such contemptuous treatment, to engage the Son of God to listen to his accursed councils ; and seduce him to an act of the highest dishonor to his heavenly Father, that of paying divine homage to this infernal spirit ? This interpretation represents the old serpent as acting quite out of character, and supposes him to be as void of policy as he is of goodness ; inasmuch, as he used the least art in proposing temptations, where the greatest would have been insufficient to insure success.

“It detracts from the dignity and sanctity of the Redeemer, to be seen in conference with, and under the power of, an unclean spirit, who transports at his pleasure his Sovereign and his Judge, from place to place ; raises him to the most conspicuous stations to expose him to public derision ; and wantonly and arrogantly propounds to him one foolish enterprise after another.”

The common opinion is objectionable, 1. Because, notwithstanding it supposes the devil to be the most subtle and crafty of all beings, yet in the temptation of Jesus, it ascribes to him the greatest imaginable folly. 2. Because it ascribes to him the performance of stupendous miracles ; such as assuming a corporeal or invisible form at his option, speaking with human voice and organs, transporting our Saviour bodily to the top of the lofty Jewish temple, &c. 3. Because it ascribes to him not only foolish and absurd acts, but absolute impossibilities. Such for example as his showing Christ *all the kingdoms of the world* from an exceeding high mountain ; for the earth being globular, there is not only no mountain sufficiently lofty to command a view of all its kingdoms, but even the sun itself can be seen by, and shine on, only one hemisphere at a time. How then could the devil, at one view, and in one moment of time, show Christ not only all the kingdoms of the earth, but likewise every thing that constituted their glory and grandeur ? “This,” Mr. Farmer justly remarks, “does not seem so properly a miracle, as an absurdity and contradiction.”



You will now probably ask, if I reject a literal interpretation of this account, how shall it be understood? Who or what was the tempter, and what was the temptation? I apprehend we shall find these questions abundantly answered by a careful attention to the Scriptures. We are informed, Heb. iv: 15, that Jesus "was tempted in all points—*like as we are*, yet without sin." How are we tempted? James says, i: 14, "Every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed." If then, Jesus "was tempted in all points like as we are," and if "every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed," what reason have we to believe he was tempted in so very different a manner from any of the rest of the human family, as this account, taken literally, would suppose. What reason have we to believe a personal devil, or fallen angel, had any thing to do with it? Have any of us ever seen, or held personal conferences with, or had direct and open temptations presented to us by, such a being? No one in his senses will pretend it. The temptation of Christ, then, was like the temptation of any and every other man, except so far as his circumstances and situation differed from those of other men, which circumstances possibly might have made his temptation more trying than is generally experienced. He had just been baptized, and received the special attestations of the divine favor in the descent of the holy spirit upon him, designating him as the promised Messiah; immediately after which he was led up by the spirit of God (not by a fallen angel) into the wilderness, to pass trial, as it were, preparatory to entering on the great work before him. And if he was not superior to, and able to overcome, the evil propensities of human nature, "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life," he was unfit for the labor of reforming the world.

I will now attend to the account of the temptations.—"And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungered." Matt. iv: 2. We are not to suppose that during these forty days our Lord *totally* abstained from the use of all food. Fasting, in Scripture language, frequently signifies the taking of a less quantity, or coarser kind of food than usual, or going without any regular meals. See Acts xxvii: 33, and other passages,

particularly the book of Daniel. No miracle is here supposed to have been wrought ; though a miracle would have been necessary to sustain life forty days without any food. And if a miracle were wrought to sustain life without food, why not proper that the miraculous power be employed to turn stones into bread for the same purpose, i. e. to keep him alive by some extraordinary means ? It was natural, after fasting forty days, that his appetite should become clamorous, and his lust, or great desire for food, should suggest to him the idea of working a miracle to supply his wants. But this evil temptation he resisted ; and thus expostulates with his appetite : " It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God : " That is, the power of working miracles was not given me for this purpose, to minister to my own appetites, but for a very different object—I am sent to minister to others and to save the world—" It is my meat and drink to do the will of him that sent me," and he who has sent me for this purpose, will sustain me, and provide, in due time, for all my wants. Here is no necessity of supposing a fallen angel or personal evil spirit : bodily appetite was the tempter ; and by resisting it, our Saviour proved that he came to destroy the works of the devil, or that lust which would tempt to the abuse or perversion of powers and privileges.

In the second temptation, he is raised to a pinnacle of the temple and urged to cast himself down, &c. This account represents Jesus as raised in his imagination to the most elevated station in the Jewish temple and kingdom, and possessed of the means (by working a miracle before the assembled nation, and throwing himself down, or casting himself among them as their king from heaven) of raising himself to the throne, and being proclaimed Messiah, King of the Jews, without submitting to the humiliation, trials and sufferings that he knew he must otherwise endure. He saw on the one hand, poverty, reproach, contempt, sufferings and death ; and on the other, riches, honor, worldly greatness and grandeur ; and the same motive that prompted the prayer in reference to the former, " if it be possible let this cup pass from me," also prompted the desire of attaining the latter. But does he yield to this temptation ? does he consult his own will alone, or seek

only his own worldly emolument and ease? No; he firmly resists those evil suggestions of his own desires; and says, "Not my will, but thine, O God, be done"—"It is written, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God"—"My kingdom is not of this world;"—he spurns the crown from him with disdain. For this was not the object of his mission—this was not the purpose for which the power of working miracles was given to him. Here, again, as in the first temptation, there is no need of supposing a personal devil concerned in the proposing of the miracle. His own desires were sufficient.

In the third temptation, Christ was taken to the top of an exceeding high mountain, and all the kingdoms of the world and their glory were presented to his view, and he was promised them all if he would fall down and worship his tempter. But I ask, Sir, was a wicked and fallen angel in possession of all these? or could Jesus be made to believe he had it in his power to bestow them on him? The supposition is too full of absurdity to be credited for a moment. The mountain on which he was elevated was doubtless that of human greatness—the tempter, ambition. His ambition, or the lust of power so natural to man, suggested to him the means of acquiring all these kingdoms, if he would devote himself obsequiously to its dictates. The Roman power, at that time, extended over all the known world, and gave the kingdoms of the world to whomsoever it listed. Ambition prompted the desire to possess this power, by placing himself at its head. But does he yield to the temptation, and use his miraculous power to acquire this temporal but universal empire? No: this was not the object for which the power of working miracles was given him. Though born to be a king over all the earth; and though all the kingdoms of the world were finally to become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ, and his dominion was to be "from sea to sea, and from the rivers to the ends of the earth;" yet his sceptre was to be "the sceptre of righteousness," and through sufferings was he to be made perfect. "For the hope of the glory set before him," he was to "endure the cross, despising the shame." "Though he were a Son, he learned obedience by the things which he suffered." He worshipped none of the gods of this world; neither pride, nor avarice, nor am-



bition ; but resisted all their temptations, saying, "Get thee behind me satan, (or adversary,) for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve."

Thus, Sir, the whole account of our Saviour's temptation by the devil, or satan, is explained consistently and satisfactorily, without either doing violence to the Scriptures on the one hand, or outraging reason and common sense on the other. Should you be disposed to object against the explanation I have given, by saying it detracts from the honor, dignity, and excellency of our Lord, to suppose him liable to be tempted or influenced by any of the human and evil propensities or passions named ; I reply : Jesus was subject to like passions and wants with other men—he was hungry, and thirsty, and weary, offended and pleased, he rejoiced and wept—he was tempted "in all points like as we are, yet without sin. For in that he himself hath suffered, being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted." Sin does not consist in having passions or infirmities, nor in being tempted by them, but in yielding to them contrary to the law of God or known duty. Hence, the having of them is no disparagement to the character of Jesus, but the overcoming of them is greatly to his honor ; even more so than if, being free from them, he had merely refused to yield to the foolish projects of an open and known foe, where no possible advantage could accrue from yielding to them.

The word *diabolos* is frequently used to represent or personify an evil principle, particularly hatred or enmity. It is also applied to individuals and bodies of men who are actuated by hatred or enmity. John vi : 70. "Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?" Dr. Campbell renders the term *diabolos* here *spy*, Newcomb and Wakefield render it *accuser*, and the Improved Version, *false accuser*. John xiii : 2. "And supper being ended, the devil having now put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him," &c. In one of these texts Judas is called a devil ; and in the other the devil is said to have put the evil intention into his heart. Now what is the inference to be drawn from this circumstance, unless it be this, that the *Jews*, or *enemies* of Christ had put it into the heart of Judas to betray him, and he had *actually become one of his enemies* ?

1 Peter v : 8. "Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour," &c. Here the adversary, so emphatically called the devil, is compared to a roaring lion, that walketh about seeking whom he may devour. Now that this adversary was nothing more nor less than human beings, I think will appear evident by a little reflection and examination. Human beings are frequently compared to lions, devouring lions, and roaring lions ; and not only so, but bodies of people are thus spoken of in the singular number. See Num. xxiii : 24, xxiv : 8, 9 ; Jer. ii : 30, iv : 7, and l : 17 ; Ps. xvii : 12, xxii : 13, 21 ; Prov. xix : 12, xx : 2 ; Isa. v : 29 ; Ezek. xix : 1-6, xxii : 25 ; 2 Tim. iv : 17. It is a well known fact, the Jews in general, and particularly those in authority, the high priest, elders, Scribes and Pharisees, were the common enemy of the Gospel of Christ and of his apostles ; and spoken of collectively, are called "the devil," "the adversary," "satan," &c. See 1 Thes. ii : 14-18, where the connexion plainly shows that the "satan" spoken of was the Jews. The same may also be said of Eph. iv : 11, 12, &c. See Acts xvii : 5-13 ; 2 Tim. iv : 16, 17 ; 1 and 2 Thes. ; 1 and 2 Peter ; and indeed the whole historical part of the New Testament goes to show that the unbelieving Jews were collectively the common adversary, enemy, false accuser, and persecutor of the Christians, and with propriety called the devil and satan. It was this satan that had desired to have Peter that he might sift him as wheat ; and so thoroughly did the Jews sift Peter at the trial and condemnation of Jesus, that they made him thrice deny his master.

John viii : 44. "Ye are of your father, the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do," &c. (See a parallel, Acts xiii : 10.) What devil was their father ? Was it a fallen angel ? and were they the lusts of a fallen angel that they did ? To show that we are under no necessity of applying this text to a fallen angel, personal devil, or real being, I will refer you to Professor Stuart's letters to Dr. Miller, (whose orthodoxy you will not question,) in which he says, "the word *Son* was a favorite one among the Hebrews ; and was employed by them to designate a great variety of relations. The *son of any thing*, according to oriental idiom, may be either *what is closely con-*

*nected with it, dependent on it, like it, the consequence of it, worthy of it," &c.* The Professor then collates a great variety of passages from the Scriptures in which the word *son* is so used, such as *son of eight days, son of a year, son of my sorrow, son of my right hand, son of old age, son of valor, son of Belial, son of wickedness, son of perdition, son of thunder, son of consolation, son of peace, &c. &c.* After which he adds:—"Every kind of relation or resemblance, whether real or imaginary, every kind of connexion, is characterized by calling it the son of that thing to which it stands thus related, or with which it is connected." Mr. Balfour, speaking on this text, very justly remarks, "It is a plain case then, that if the Jews were of their father the devil, or sons of the devil, and if the term devil means a *slanderer*, our Lord only told them that they were 'slandereous persons.' Were they not closely connected with slander, dependent on it, like it, and worthy of it? Mr. Stuart, by the above remarks, forever settles the question, that, neither here nor any where else, son of the devil refers to a fallen angel."

The remarks already made upon those passages of Scripture which have been noticed, will, as to their spirit and general bearing, be equally applicable to all other passages where the word *diabolos* (devil) occurs in the original, and also to those where the word *satan* occurs. Indeed, they are generally considered the strongest holds in favor of the popular doctrine of a personal devil. I know of no others that have one-half the appearance of supporting that theory that these have which I have noticed. And as it has been clearly shown that these, when critically and fairly examined and explained, give no countenance whatever to so marvellous a doctrine, the theory, long as it has been preached by the Orthodox clergy, and firmly as it has been believed by their credulous hearers, must fall; and like Babylon, "be found no more at all, for ever." It must be given up as a Heathen dogma unsupported by Scripture, and revolting to reason. A few remarks will conclude what I have to say upon this subject.

1. The common doctrine of a personal devil detracts greatly from our ideas of the supremacy and goodness of God. For why should the Deity suffer sin in heaven, and allow an angel to rebel and be cast out of his kingdom, if



he were supreme in power and benevolence? And why, particularly would I ask, should he allow such a being to come to this fair world, mar the beauty of creation, deceive, lead astray, and ruin his best work? Why subject his creature man to the malignant assaults and cruel caprice of so vile a demon?

2. This doctrine is inconsistent with itself. It supposes the devil to be confined in hell, and yet at large in the earth; that he is not the Supreme Being, and yet is omnipresent, in all parts of creation at one and the same time; that he is constantly trying to drag people to hell, and yet is often the means, by frightening them, of driving them into the church and thence getting them to heaven; that God can govern and rule him as he please, and yet he often thwarts the plans and defeats the purposes of Omnipotence, particularly in revivals of religion, when, notwithstanding God is trying to convert and save souls, the devil throws so many temptations and obstacles in the way, that thousands finally go down to hell whom God wished to take to heaven.

3. This doctrine serves, if not entirely to excuse, at least greatly to palliate the crimes which men commit.—For it is a convenient and plausible plea for men to adopt, when overtaken in overt acts of wickedness:—"The devil tempted and deceived me into the fault"—Such an one, perhaps the murderer, "being instigated by the devil, did way-lay, assault and murder," &c., thus throwing all the blame, from the real and actual villain, upon the back of the poor devil, who had no more to do with the crime than the inhabitants of the moon.

4. The doctrine generates absurd, foolish, superstitious and pernicious fears in the minds of the weak and timid. How often are these people led to despair and unnatural fear, by believing themselves possessed of the devil, or given over to the buffetings and cruel caprices of this malignant monster, for time and eternity!

5. Though it may be the means of frightening some timid and weak minds into obsequiousness to the dictates of the clergy, it can never be of any real advantage or benefit to those who believe it. The doctrine is not only useless, but its tendency is pernicious.

6. There is no necessity for supposing the existence of such a being as the devil, either for a consistent explanation

of the Scriptures, or for any other valuable purpose whatever. All the evil existing in the world may be rationally and scripturally accounted for without this supposition. "Every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin; and sin when it is finished, bringeth forth death." Christ came to "destroy the works of the devil;" i. e. to "take away the *sin* of the world." He is to "destroy death and him that hath the power of death, that is, the devil," or that sin (the offspring of lust) which "when it is finished," or consummated, "bringeth forth death." John i: 29; Heb. ii: 14; James i: 14, 15; 1 John iii: 8.

Yours, &c.

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## LETTER XVI.

### *On the doctrine of the Trinity.*

DEAR SIR—After so long a lapse of time, as has passed since I last wrote you, I again resume my pen to renewedly call your attention to the discussion of the doctrinal subjects already commenced. I trust your goodness will pardon the delay, when I assure you, that, from the multiplicity of my avocations, I have not found leisure to resume this labor till the present moment. The appropriation of my time to particular duties is regulated by the following rules,—I first consider and do what *must* be done; 2. what *ought* to be done; and 3, what *may* be done. As the writing of these letters was viewed among the *second* class of duties, and I have had a constant supply of the first on hand, therefore this delay. Not but that the subject of these letters is of sufficient importance to bring them under the first head; but then the *time when*, is not so important as the *manner in which* they are performed.

The particular branch of your doctrine, to the discussion of which I called your attention in my last three letters, was that of *fallen angels* and a *personal devil*. The next in order will be that of the *trinity*. And here, I would

observe, I have altogether the advantage of you ; inasmuch as I have reason and common sense on my side of the question, to begin with, and which I have no fears will lead me astray ; in addition to which, all the aid the Scriptures can yield either of us, will be on my side : for you maintain, in the first place, that the doctrine of the trinity is what reason and common sense cannot see through nor explain, and that reason is a dangerous guide to follow ; and secondly, that it is so sacred a mystery that no man can understand or comprehend it, whether he be carnally, or spiritually minded. Of course it cannot be a matter of revelation : for revelation is that which makes manifest, or reveals to the understanding. But as the trinity cannot be understood, it, of course, has never been revealed. Hence, you can derive no aid either from reason or revelation.

This doctrine is thus stated in your Confession of Faith, chap. ii : § 1, 3. " There is but one only living and true God, who is infinite in being and perfection, a most pure spirit, invisible, without body, parts, or passions, immutable, immense, eternal, incomprehensible," &c. " In unity of the Godhead there be three persons of one substance, power, and eternity ; God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost. The Father is of none, neither begotten nor proceeding ; the Son is eternally begotten of the Father ; the Holy Ghost eternally proceeding from the Father and the Son." In the Larger Catechism, adopted by your church, and published with your Confession of Faith, we read : " There be three persons in the Godhead, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost ; and these three are one true eternal God, the same in substance, equal in power and glory : although distinguished by their personal properties."

On the perusal of the above language, methinks the serious, reflecting, and philosophical mind cannot but be forcibly struck with the remarkable contrast exhibited between this language, and the simple, plain and intelligible language of the Bible. And with equal force, also, must such a mind be struck with the unintelligible jargon, absurdity and contradictions contained in this language. I wish here to submit a few simple questions to your consideration. Is Jesus Christ the true and essential God ?



You will doubtless answer, "Yes." Had he a body? "Yes." Had he parts? "Yes." Had he passions? "Yes." Well, then, according to your Confession, he cannot be essentially God: for, as we have seen, *that* asserts that God is "without body, parts, or passions."

Again, if the three persons in the Godhead are essentially one, whatever may be affirmed of one, may be affirmed of the others. If it may be said of the Son, "he is eternally begotten," may not the same be affirmed of the Father? Should you answer, "No, it is absurd and contrary to all reason and analogy to speak thus of the Father," I would then ask, Is it not equally absurd and contrary to all analogy and reason, to say of the Son, he is *eternally begotten*? Does not this sound very odd—*eternally begotten*! Does not the very word *begotten* imply a *particular time* of begetting, and a time when the Son was not begotten? And is it not monstrously absurd, and even impossible, to say of a *Son*, *he is as old as his Father*? But that the three persons in your trinity are not essentially the same, is proved by the very language of your Confession. For that maintains that the Father is always *active*, and the Son always *passive*; the one always *begetting*, and the other always *being begotten*: and the Holy Ghost possessing still a different property, not common to either of the other two, neither *begetting* nor *begotten*, but *proceeding*.

Again, as you maintain that the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God, and these three are one; let me ask, Is *the Son, the Father*? If you say "Yes," you give up the doctrine of the trinity, and allow, simply, that one and the same being is called by *different names*, the same as Paul and Saul signify the same being, or person; or Joses, Barnabas, and Son of Consolation. (Acts iv: 36, and xiii: 9.) If you say "the Son is *not* the Father, but he is God; he is not the Holy Ghost, but he is God: and the Holy Ghost is not the Father, nor is he the Son, yet he is God;" then let me ask, Have you not three Gods? Most certainly you have. So take which horn of the dilemma you will, it does not relieve you of the difficulty. Should you now, to extricate yourself from the difficulty, affirm that each of the three persons named is God *in union*, or *conjunction*, with the other two, but

neither is separately or alone God; then you acknowledge the *divisibility* of God, and virtually *divide him into three equal parts*, all of which, when united, make up, or constitute one God! And hence, you might, with equal propriety, speak of *one-third*, or *two-thirds* of the Godhead!

But let us trace this doctrine to its origin; and learn, if possible, when and where it originated. Does the volume of Nature teach any such doctrine? Is there any thing in the whole compass of man's observation, or of creation itself, that could suggest the most distant idea of such a doctrine? No, nothing. Reason and philosophy say there cannot be, in the universe, more than one self-existent being, and that this being must be undivided, and necessarily the cause of all other beings and existences. And while all will admit that it is absurd to suppose more causes than are necessary, none will deny that the Father, the self-existent, unoriginated Jehovah, is a cause abundantly sufficient for nature and all its phenomena. Well, did God reveal himself to Adam as a tri-personal being, consisting of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost? Did Adam know any thing about the trinity? No, nothing. Did Moses, or the ancient patriarchs, or prophets of Israel, know or teach any thing of the trinity? Not a syllable. On the contrary, they taught the "Lord our God is ONE Lord, and thou shalt have no other Gods beside me—There is no other God—Have we not all ONE FATHER? Hath not ONE GOD created us?" The Old Testament contains nothing in allusion to so strange a theory, or that can, without the greatest violence, be tortured into its support.

Well, did Christ, or any of his apostles ever teach the doctrine of the trinity, or any thing that resembled it? I think no person, free from prejudice, sectarian bias, and the power of tradition, will assert that they did. For the New Testament contains no such language as Trinitarians now use to express that doctrine. No such expressions or phrases occur as, *God the Son, God the Holy Ghost, Three persons in one God, Triune God, The eternal Three, God-man, Trinity, Human or Divine nature of Christ, eternally begotten, eternal procession, &c.* No, Sir, these phrases, so common in the writings of Trinitarians, are never found in the New Testament. But consider, Sir, would not *some one* of them be likely to be found there if the

trinity were, as you maintain, a fundamental doctrine of the Gospel? Let candor give the answer.

Not only is the New Testament silent as to any and all the phrases used by Trinitarians to express their faith, but, as I shall hereafter show, it decidedly opposes so strange and unnatural a theory. But, Sir, I am prepared to state, not only that neither Christ nor his apostles taught the doctrine of the trinity, but that *it was not taught, nor even named, during the two or three first centuries*; at least not in the sense in which it is now held, if named at all. It is true, the paganizing Christians, and mystic philosophers of the Platonic and Peripatetic schools, began early to corrupt Christianity, and to seek to blend its doctrines with Polytheism and Paganism. But the doctrine of the trinity had not been established, nor even named, till the Council of Nice, assembled by Constantine, in the year 325. This Council, it appears, was called to settle a dispute which had arisen between Alexander, Bishop of Alexandria, and Arius, a Presbyter in the same church; and, as might be expected, the Bishop had the Presbyter expelled. It appears from Eutychius, the Patriarch of Alexandria, that there were two thousand and forty-eight Bishops met at Nice; that they had different opinions of the nature of Jesus Christ. Sabelius and his followers believed that Christ was derived from the Father, like a flame of fire hanging down from another, but not diminishing the first. Paul of Samosata, Patriarch of Antioch, and his followers, believed in the proper humanity of Christ; but chosen by the grace of God to be the deliverer of mankind. And three hundred and eighteen Bishops believed in his equality with the Father. From hence, it appears there were one thousand seven hundred and thirty Bishops opposed to the doctrine of the equality of the Father and Son; of course they were Unitarians: though entertaining different ideas respecting the nature of Christ, they had only one respecting the God and Father of all. Josephus, a native of Egypt, but a Christian priest, relates that "two thousand and forty-eight Bishops met at Nice, and the Emperor commanded that the creed drawn up by the Bishop of Jerusalem should be read in the Synod. Three hundred and eighteen Bishops embraced it, seventeen hundred and thirty differed in various ways, neither agreeing in their sentiments nor any one article of faith."



Ismael Ibu Ali, a Mahommedan historian of great reputation, also says, "the aforesaid three hundred and eighteen Bishops moreover, assenting to the ordinance of Constantine, set forth the Christian faith in a *different manner* from what had been current as such heretofore." So that it is evident that not a sixth part of the Bishops present, (only three hundred and eighteen out of two thousand and forty-eight,) could subscribe to the doctrine of the Nicene creed; but then it is presumed the Emperor's sword, put into the scale, was enough to turn the balance in favor of the Bishop of Alexandria.

Notwithstanding the zeal with which Constantine espoused the cause of Alexander, and decided against the voice of a vast majority of the Council, he soon repented of his then ultra-orthodoxy, banished the famous Athanasius to Treves, recalled Arius, and died an Arian. Furthermore, the Council of Jerusalem received Arius; and Constantius, abetting the dying sentiments of his father, established Arianism as the religion of his empire.

But still, at this late period, the doctrine of the trinity seems not to have been known. Though the deity of Christ was advocated by a few, the deity of the Holy Ghost, and the inducting him as a third person into the trinity, had not yet been thought of. At length, after a long struggle between the followers of Arius and Sabellius, Athanasius began to publish (about the year 363) his new doctrine of the Holy Spirit, with some degree of approbation; and having raised up a new party, Theodosius the Great called another general Council at Constantinople, A. D. 381; which adopted the Holy Ghost into (I had almost said the family of Gods) the holy trinity, as it then began to be called.

Thus Athanasius, in the latter part of the fourth century, seems to have brought forth this doctrine, and may justly claim it as his own child. Gregory Nazianzen, in one of his orations, says, "When many were unsound in the faith concerning the Son, many more concerning the Spirit, and very few sound in both articles; Athanasius was moved to assert of the Spirit, what others had done of the Son."

The forty-five creed-making Councils that assembled during this century, and the rapidly accumulating corruptions that began now to pour into the church from all

quarters, put the finishing strokes to the doctrine of the trinity, and it was fixed during the long and dark ages of the church, much the same as it is now held forth by Trinitarian divines. It was conceived in sin and shapen in iniquity. But what is to me the most marvellous, is, that such a doctrine, so unfounded in reason and the word of God, unknown during the three first centuries of the Christian era, brought forth and cherished in the darkness and corruptions of that age, should still be held in this enlightened age and country, by my good brethren the Presbyterians, and particularly by so sensible a man as Br. S. C. Aikin.

I shall resume this subject in another letter, shortly.

Yours, &c.

## LETTER XVII.

*The same subject continued.*

DEAR SIR—Having, in my last, pointed out some of the absurdities involved in the doctrine of the trinity; shown its opposition to reason and philosophy; that it was unknown to the writers of the Old and New Testaments, neither of which contain any expressions like those employed by Trinitarians; and moreover, that the doctrine had its origin, with other kindred errors and absurdities, in the corruptions of Christianity that rapidly accumulated in the fourth century; I shall now proceed, First, to examine some of the principal arguments, pretended to be drawn from the Bible, in its support; and Secondly, to set forth the simple doctrine of the Scriptures in relation to the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

Trinitarians imagine they discover proof of the trinity in the very first verse in the Bible; and that in the books of Moses this proof is abundant; from the fact, that *Elohim*, the Hebrew word rendered God, is used in the plural number: and because *Elohim* (Gods, as you term the word) is joined with a singular verb, it therefore denotes *trinity*

in *unity*. But, Sir, this is too puerile and childish an argument to stand the test of enlightened reason and learned criticism. Calvin, himself, wholly disapproved of this argument, and says in relation to it, "*that readers should be advised to beware of such violent comments.*" And Dr. Edwards says, "some may think there lurks a mystery in the word *Elohim* constructed with a singular verb, denoting trinity in unity; but what shall be said of *Adonim*, *Baalim*, and even *Behemoth*, which you can read with a singular adjunct, Job xiv: 10, which is perhaps used in the plural to express the vastness of the beast." The plural form of *Elohim*, (God,) as well as of the pronouns in various places (as in Gen. i: 26, where "God said, *let us make man in our image,*") is perfectly consonant with the genius of the Hebrew language, and with the custom of all oriental nations, even though one person, in the singular number only, is intended; as every well instructed scribe will tell you. It is used to denote dignity, authority, or greatness. But, Sir, suppose we grant that *Elohim* means, properly, *Gods*, in the plural, instead of *God*, in the singular—what will it prove in favor of Trinitarianism? Just nothing at all: for it might as justly be supposed to teach *two, four, ten*, or an *hundred Gods*, as *three*. Nay, the polytheist might as well adduce this argument in favor of the thirty thousand gods of Hesiod, as the Trinitarian could in favor of his three. The Heathen nations among whom the Israelites sojourned, worshipped *Elohim* in *MANY Gods*: But to the Jews it was said, "Hear, O Israel: the Lord, *our Elohim*, is *one Lord*." And Jesus, in quoting this, Mark xii: 39, says, "*Kurios ho Theos sou, Kurios eis estin,*" using *Theos*, God, in the singular number, and showing that it was so to be understood.

Isa. ix: 6. "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given.....His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace," is frequently adduced in support of the absolute deity of Christ. But, Sir, let me ask, Who is the *Giver* of this Son? Are the *gift* and the *Giver* one and the same? And was the eternal, uncreated God ever conceived and *born* of a woman? "*His name shall be called,*" &c. But does calling this Son by these *names*, make him in reality, the *self-existent Jehovah*? If so, will not the



naming of a son, *Lemuel*, (which signifies the strong God,) make him really a *strong God*? Will not the naming of a son, *Eliab*, (which signifies God my Father,) make him in reality our *God and Father*? Are we to consider all men that bear the names, *Elijah*, (God the Lord,) *Eliel*, (God my God,) and other Hebrew names of similar import, as in reality the same being which the *names* signify? Again, allowing Christ to be the *mighty God*, let me ask, how many *mighty* Gods will it take to make one *Almighty*? The phrase "*everlasting Father*," according to all good critics, should be rendered, *Father of the age*. Some eminent scholars render the text, "The mighty God shall call him a wonderful Mediator, Father of his age, and the Prince of Peace." Abraham is called "the father of the faithful," and has been for ages past, and will be for ages to come, so called; and hence, might properly be called, *The everlasting (age lasting) father of the faithful*. This text, therefore, affords your theory no support.

John i: 1-3, is considered incontrovertible evidence of the absolute deity of Christ. "In the beginning was the word," &c. But I would ask, In the beginning of *what*—was the word? Was it in the beginning of *God*? Did *God* ever *have a beginning*? No. It must be, then, in the beginning of the creation; or perhaps, more properly, in the beginning of the Gospel dispensation, or of the *new creation*, which was committed to him to accomplish, and by whose instrumentality and authority all things were to be renewed. Calvin says, *Christ made all things new, omnia fecit nova Christus*. And the apostles speak of the *regeneration*, but not of the *original creation* of all things by Christ; unless it be, as some suppose, by him as the *medium* or *instrument*. It should, however, be observed, the word *egeneto*, in the 3d verse, rendered *made*, never signifies to create, in the New Testament, although it occurs more than seven hundred times. It signifies *to be, to become, to be done, to happen*. The text, therefore, properly signifies that all things in the Gospel economy were done by the authority or direction of the Messiah. But if, by the *Word*, here mentioned, we are to understand the Supreme Jehovah, is there any sense in the expression, "the Word was *with God*"? Does it mean that *God was with himself*? "The Word was God." But "they were

called gods to whom the word of God came"—"there be gods many and lords many" (see the word *gods* in the original, or in the marginal readings, in the following texts: Exod. xv : 11, xxi : 6, xxii : 8, 9, 28; Deut. x : 17; 1 Sam. xxviii : 13; Ps. viii : 5, lxxxii : 1.) though "to us" says the apostle, "there is but one God, THE FATHER." John x : 34, 35; 1 Cor. viii : 5, 6. God says to Moses, "See I have made *thee a god* unto Pharaoh." Exod. vii : 1. Thus you will perceive the word *god* is frequently used in the Scriptures in a subordinate sense. And whenever it is applied to any other person or being, except the "Father of the spirits of all flesh," it must evidently be used in a subordinate sense; for God is *one*, and his name *One*.

Another text supposed to favor the doctrine under consideration, is John x : 30. "I and my Father are one." But, Sir, let me ask, what evidence this affords in your favor? Does it mean oneness of *person*? or oneness of *being*? or simply oneness or unison of *design*? If the first, it overthrows your distinction or *plurality* of *persons* in the Godhead. If the second, it proves that all of whom this oneness is affirmed are in reality but *one being*. e. g. "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word, that they *all may be one*; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that *they also may be one* in us"—"that they may be *one even as we are one*." John xvii : 20-22. Then, of course, God the Father, Christ the Son, and all the *thousands* of believers that ever have, and ever shall live, constitute *but one being*! St. Paul says, "I have planted, Apollos watered"—"Now he that planteth and he that watereth *are one*." 1 Cor. iii : 6, 8. Of course, Paul and Apollos were but *one person, one being*, by this Trinitarian logic! Tertullian observes, that the expression is *unum, one thing*, not *one person*; and he explains it to mean *unity, likeness, conjunction*, and the *love the Father bore to the Son*. Origen says, let him consider that text, *all that believed were of one heart and of one soul*, and then he will understand this, *I and my Father are one*. The numeral adjective, *en* in the Greek, and *unum* in the Latin, being in the *neuter* gender, neither agrees with the pronoun *I*, nor the word *Father*, and therefore, signifies not unity of person or being, but agreement of society, harmony of purpose and design.

1 Tim. iii : 16, needs only to be correctly translated, to show that it affords your theory no support. Dr. Adam Clarke, who wished to make every text bend to the support of the trinity, that he possibly could, confesses, "We are perplexed by various readings on the first clause, *Theos ephanerote en sarki*, God was manifest in the flesh : for instead of *Theos*, God, several Mss. versions and fathers have *os* or *o*, *which* or *who*. And this is generally referred to the word *mystery* : 'Great is the mystery of godliness *which* was manifested in the flesh.'" Agreeable to Griesbach's punctuation, and a correct translation from the best Greek Mss. the text should read (including the last clause of the 15th verse) thus : "The pillar and firm support of the truth (and confessedly great) is this mystery of godliness : He who was manifested in flesh, justified in spirit, hath appeared to messengers, been proclaimed among nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory."

I will next offer a few remarks on Heb. i : 8. Here again we have reason to believe our common version does not present us with a true and proper translation. We have the authority of many great and good men for rendering it thus : "But to the Son, [he saith,] God is thy throne to the age of the age." By thus rendering the text correctly, all obscurity disappears. The 6th verse of this chapter, which is generally supposed to teach that divine worship is due to Jesus, I conceive is properly rendered thus : "let all the messengers of God pay homage, or reverence, to him." The word *proskuneo*, represents that civil homage which was usually paid to distinguished persons in oriental countries. See the *Septuagint*, Gen. xxiii : 7, 12 ; 1 Chron. xxix : 20 ; Dan. ii : 46, and in the New Testament, Matt. viii : 2, xviii : 26 ; Acts x : 25, where the word *proskuneo*, here rendered worship, occurs. But the context in Heb. i : particularly verse 9, shows that the apostle was very far from believing Jesus Christ to be the supreme Jehovah, entitled to supreme adoration—"Therefore God, even THY God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness ABOVE THY FELLOWS." Now Jesus has a God. Has the Father a God ? And who were the *fellows* or *companions* of Jesus ? Were they the Father and Holy Ghost ? If so, then Jesus, the Christ, is not merely equal to, but *above* them, since his anointing. But



if men, prophets or patriarchs, or angels, or even arch-angels were his *fellows* or *companions*, then there would be a propriety in saying he was anointed *above* them.

1 John v : 7. "For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Spirit, and these three are one," is so manifestly spurious, an entire forgery, and no part of St. John's writing, that it would be a waste of time to remark on it, except to present the evidence of its spuriousness, for which purpose I insert the note\* below, which is taken from the Improved Version of the New Testament.

I have now examined some of the principal arguments and Scriptures commonly adduced by Trinitarians in favor of their hypothesis, and all, I believe, on which *much* reliance is placed by you ; and find the doctrine of the trinity "weighed in the balance and found wanting." I shall therefore proceed to make a few more brief remarks on the subject, present you with the simple doctrine of the Bible, and then dismiss the theme.

It appears to me, Sir, that a doctrine so mysterious, or rather, so absurd, inconsistent and contradictory, as that of the trinity, should never be *admitted*, much less *believed* or pretended to be believed, without the fullest and most

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\* "1. This text concerning the heavenly witnesses, is not contained in any Greek manuscript which was written earlier than the fifteenth century. 2. Nor in any Latin manuscript earlier than the ninth century. 3. It is not found in any of the ancient versions. 4. It is not cited by any of the Greek ecclesiastical writers, though to prove the doctrine of the trinity they have cited the words both before and after this text. 5. It is not cited by any of the early Latin fathers, even when the subjects upon which they treat, would naturally have led them to appeal to its authority. 6. It is first cited by Virgilius Tapsensis, a Latin writer of no credit, in the latter end of the fifth century, and by him it is suspected to have been forged. 7. It has been omitted as spurious in many editions of the New Testament since the Reformation:—in the two first of Erasmus, in those of Aldus, Colinæus, Zuinglius, and lately of Griesbach. 8. It was omitted by Luther, in his German version. In the old English Bibles of Henry VIII., Edward VI. and Elizabeth, it was printed in small types, or included in brackets: but between the years 1566 and 1580, it began to be printed as it now stands; by whose authority, is not known.—See Travis' Letters to Gibbon, and Porson's to Travis. Also, Griesbach's excellent dissertation on the text, at the end of the second volume. Archbishop Newcome omits the text, and the Bishop of Lincoln expresses his conviction that it is spurious. Elem. of Theol. vol. ii. p. 90, note."

unequivocal evidence from the word of God. And certainly the word of God can never countenance an absurd and contradictory doctrine. But the trinity is attempted to be supported by a few isolated texts, figurative expressions, and mis-translations of Scripture, and in opposition to reason, the general tenor of the Bible, and scores of plain, positive, and unequivocal passages.

The frequent shifting of their ground, and the disingenuous quibbling of Trinitarians, when arguing on the subject, very clearly evince the want of any solid foundation on which to build their doctrine. For instance, when they are reminded of the apparent weakness and dependence of Jesus—that he was once a weak and helpless infant—that he increased in stature, and in favor with God and man—that he was weary and faint, hungered, thirsted, wept, rejoiced, and prayed—was grieved and tempted, betrayed and in agony—that he bled, and died, and was buried; the reply they make generally is, that these things are said of his *human nature*—that some things are said of him *as a man*, and others *as God*. But why does not the *Bible* make this distinction between his *two natures*, if it existed? Why does not Jesus himself make the distinction, and tell his disciples when they are to understand his *human nature* as speaking, and when the *divine*? When he says, “the Father is greater than I,” which nature did he intend? If the *human* nature merely, he gave no instruction on the subject; for the disciples, and every body else knew that God was greater than man. If he meant the divine nature, then your system would be overthrown at once, and the inferiority of the Son is manifest. When he says, “I can of mine own self do nothing,” why does he not add, by way of explanation, “that is, my *human* nature can do nothing, but my *divine* nature can do all things.” But instead of this, he says, “my Father—he doeth the work.” We find nothing of this distinction between the two supposed natures of Christ, either in his own instructions, or those of any of his disciples or his historians; nor no intimation but what the *whole* of what constituted Christ Jesus (whether *one* or *two natures*) was intended and included whenever he spoke of himself. But if either part of his nature were the essential Divinity, why does he exclaim when on the cross, “My God, my God, why hast thou for-

saken me?" Had one part of his nature forsaken the other? Why does he afterwards say, "Father, into thy hands I commend *my spirit*?" Why not say, I commend my *human* nature into the care of my *divine* nature? It appears to me, Sir, that this attempt to make a distinction where neither God, nor Christ, nor any inspired writer has made one, manifests the weakness of your cause.

It is true, Jesus says, "I have power to lay down my life, and I have power to take it again:" and again, "All power is given me in heaven and in earth:" but in the former case he immediately explains himself, by saying, "This commandment have I received of my Father;" and in the latter case the very expression shows that the power was not originally and inherently in himself; but was *given* him of the Father. Indeed, in all he said, he acknowledged his inferiority to, and dependence on, the Father. He says, "I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me." Therefore, he says, "not my will, but thine be done." "My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me. If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.....When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he, and that *I do nothing of myself*; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things.....I speak that which I have seen with my Father.....For my Father *is greater* than I." John vi: 38, vii: 16, 17, viii: 28, 38, xiv: 28.

But, Sir, notwithstanding I deny the doctrine of the trinity, and the supreme deity of Christ, because not taught in, but directly opposed to the Bible, and maintain the dependence and inferiority of the Son to the Father, I nevertheless maintain and firmly believe that his doctrine is the doctrine of God; his authority, the authority of God; his miracles, the miracles of God; and his salvation, the salvation of God. For God *gave* the world the doctrine, *through him*, commissioned him "to bear witness to the truth," to work miracles in his name, and to accomplish the great work of salvation. Acts ii: 22-24, xiii: 23; Luke i: 68, 69; John xviii: 37; Isa. xlix: 6. Therefore, I hold that all men should honor the Son as they honor the Father, i. e. they should honor the Father through the Son. For to dishonor the Son, would be to



dishonor God; for God sent him. Should the government of France send a minister plenipotentiary to this country, on civil affairs, an insult offered to him would be an insult offered to the government of France, and an honor done to him would be an honor done to France; and his authority to transact civil affairs would be the authority of France, for that authority had been delegated to, and vested in him. It therefore detracts nothing, either from the authority or efficacy of the Gospel dispensation, to deny the absolute deity of Christ, any more than it detracts from the authority of the *law*, given to the Israelites, to deny the absolute deity of Moses, by, or through whom that law was dispensed.

The simple and plain doctrine of the Gospel seems to be this—1. That there is *one*, and *but* one, self-existent and eternal God; and this one God is the Father only. For, says Paul, “to us there is **BUT ONE GOD, THE FATHER**, of whom are all things, and we in him.” 1 Cor. viii: 6. “One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.” Eph. iv: 6. “There is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.” 1 Tim. ii: 5. Now, it must be evident that this one mediator between God and men, cannot be that God, *between* whom, and men, he is the mediator—in other words, he cannot be the mediator between *himself* and men. “Now a mediator is not a mediator of one, but God is one.” Gal. iii: 20; Deut. vi: 4; Isa. xlv: 5, 18, 22; Mal. ii: 10; Mark xii: 29; Acts xvii: 24–29.

2. That Jesus Christ is the one mediator between God and men, the promised Messiah, “declared to be the Son of God with power,” and “the Saviour of the world,” “the image of the invisible God,” (of course not that God, *of whom* he is the *Son* and the *image*,) “the brightness of the Father’s glory, and the express image of his person”—that to him the divine spirit was given without measure, and hence, God “hath made him both Lord and Christ,” and given him power over all flesh. That it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell; and hence, he is called the beginning (or chief) of the creation of God, the first born of every creature, the first begotten of the dead, that in all things he might have the pre-eminence—that these exalted titles, and this high authority and power

were given him for a specific purpose, i. e. that he should give eternal life to as many as the Father had given him, bring many sons and daughters to glory, and reconcile all things unto God ; and that when this glorious work shall be accomplished, he is again to resign that authority and power into the hands of him who gave it, deliver up the kingdom to God the Father, and God to become all in all. (1 Cor. xv : 28.) This, Sir, is a scriptural, consistent, glorious, and consoling view of this subject.

3. The personality of the Holy Ghost, as one distinct person in the Godhead, separate from the personality of the Father, is a mere phantom of the imagination, or the invention of the clergy in the dark ages of the church, to gratify their love of mystery, and remove the faith of Christians from the simplicity of the Gospel. The word *Ghost* is an improper, or at least an inelegant translation of the Greek *pneuma*, in other places rendered *spirit*. The *divine*, or *holy spirit* signifies, not a distinct *person* in the Godhead, but the *energy, power, sufficiency, influence*, and sometimes the *consolation of God*. These, I think, will be found to be the only senses in which the phrase *Holy Ghost*, or *Divine Spirit*, is used, unless, perhaps, in some few cases it be used expletively for God.

Thus, Sir, I have shown the doctrine of the trinity, on which you place so much stress, to be without any solid foundation, either in reason or Scripture ; and not only so, but directly opposed to both. I now leave you and an enlightened public to judge, whether this doctrine ought any longer to receive the countenance and support of reasonable and enlightened men, professing faith in Christianity.

In my next, I propose examining the doctrine of atonement, as held by Presbyterians.

Yours, &c.

## LETTER XVIII.

### *On the doctrine of the Atonement.*

DEAR SIR—Agreeably to the promise I made in my last letter to you on the doctrine of the trinity, I now propose to call your attention to the subject of the atonement, as held by Presbyterians. And here I must premise, that, as the doctrines of Presbyterians have undergone several material alterations and modifications since I commenced this series of letters—at least in the manner of preaching them, if not in your Confession of Faith—and as there are diverse views entertained by the clergy of your order relative to the same doctrines—doctrines too, deemed fundamental—and as I am not certain what particular views you may entertain of *all* those doctrines; I shall be under the necessity of so far varying the style and matter of my future letters from that of the former, as to suit them to the circumstances of the case. I am happy, however, to remark, that wherever I might be at a loss, in ascertaining the precise views of your sect or any part thereof, from the manner and matter of your preaching, I may still safely take your Confession of Faith, including the Larger and Shorter Catechisms, as the proper standard; and that I shall be perfectly safe and right in holding you and all your clergy to defend whatever doctrines that contains; inasmuch as your General Assembly, convened at Philadelphia, in May last, unanimously resolved to retain the Confession of Faith without alteration. And, as to the question “whether the Catechisms, Larger or Shorter, are to be considered as a part of the *standards* of our church, and are comprehended in the words ‘*Confession of Faith of this church*,’ the committee answer unhesitatingly in the affirmative:” and a resolution was adopted, stating “that the Larger and Shorter Catechisms of the Westminster Assembly of divines are included, and do constitute an integral part of the standard of this church.”

I believe that, however widely your clergy and church may, and actually do, differ from each other, as to the *extent* and *efficacy* of the atonement, you are all agreed as to



its *nature* and *design*. I shall first notice your views of the nature and design of the atonement; and secondly, of its extent and efficacy.

From the general strain of your preaching and that of your order, as well as from numerous expressions in your Confession of Faith, I am justified in saying you hold the doctrine of the vicarious sufferings of Christ something like the following. In one sense, which may be called the *legal* sense, you represent man as a *debtor* to God, to an infinite amount, and having nothing with which to pay the debt, and God refusing to forgive it, Christ by his sufferings and death *pays the debt* in full, and thus satisfies the legal claims of the Father. In another and *judicial* sense, you consider man as a *criminal* infinitely guilty, and justly exposed to infinite and unending torment as the penalty of his crimes; and as God would not, and could not justly pardon, even on repentance, without wreaking his vengeance, either on the real criminal or a substitute, Christ voluntarily offered himself as a substitute, and endured the full penalty incurred by guilty man, satisfied the justice of God,

“And quenched his Father’s flaming sword  
In his own vital blood.”

In either case, the debt is paid, the penalty endured, not by the debtor or the culprit, but by a substitute, by which the justice of God is satisfied, he is reconciled to his creature, and salvation from deserved punishment is the result.

To this view of the subject, there are, Sir, in my humble opinion, insuperable objections—objections not only from reason, Scripture and the nature of the subject, but objections also arising from other parts of your own theory, that must make a perfect medley of confusion with your whole system. Some of these objections I shall now proceed to point out.

1. *This view of the subject ascribes the most glaring injustice to the Divine Being.* It exhibits a principle in Deity, which, if put in practice among men, would be unjust, licentious in the extreme, and fatal to the safety and peace of society. And can that be *justice* in God which would be the grossest *injustice* in man? What, let me ask, could be more unjust than to inflict punishment, as such, on the innocent who has never offended, when it has been

deserved only by the guilty? And what could be more licentious, than to let the sinner, hardened in crime, go unpunished, and be assured that whatever crimes he had committed or might perpetrate, he could escape all punishment, and that the full penalty of all his guilt, and the full payment of all his debt, would be endured and cancelled by a *substitute*? The doctrine of Universalism, however frequently charged by you with licentiousness, has no such salvo as this for the guilty conscience—holds out no such encouragements of impunity to transgressors. If it did, you might well consider it of immoral and licentious tendency. Again, let me ask, aside from the consideration of the injustice which your views ascribe to the Deity, and the licentiousness of their tendency, of what possible benefit or moral advantage, could the sufferings of an innocent person be, in themselves considered, to a hardened and guilty sinner? Can they soften his heart—subdue his propensity to sin—reform his life—make him a better man? I can see in them no tendency to this. Let us suppose a case: Here is a criminal condemned, and justly, to suffer imprisonment and perform hard labor in the penitentiary, for the term of ten years. A substitute comes forward and offers, in his stead, to endure the imprisonment and perform the hard labor, and let the culprit go clear of all punishment. Would this, think you, reform the criminal? Would it be of any moral advantage to him, or render society any more safe from his future depredations? Would it not rather encourage him to go on in iniquity with the expectation of impunity for the future as well as the present? And would not that Legislature, Governor, or executive power, among men, be deemed criminally unjust, and regardless of right, that should accept of such substitute, even if offered, and let the guilty go unpunished?

2. The theory I am now examining, *represents God as a changeable being*; as first hating, or being exceedingly wrathful against his sinful creatures, and then loving them—as having been once an irreconciled, and bitter enemy, and afterwards becoming reconciled, friendly and placable to the same creatures; and that too from a motive and principle that would dishonor any being he has ever created. Reason and revelation both unite in testifying that God is of ONE MIND, and none can turn him—no not

even Christ can change the mind of God—for he is *without variableness or the shadow of turning*. How then could the sufferings of Christ change the feelings of the immutable Jehovah towards the creatures of his power?

3. Other parts of your own theory are utterly irreconcilable with this view of atonement. This is particularly the case with the doctrine of the trinity, considered in my last letter, of which you are a staunch advocate. Any attempt to reconcile the two doctrines, must involve the following absurdities—i. e. allowing the Son to be the self-existent eternal God. Man, by his sins, has forfeited the divine favor, incurred an infinite debt, an infinite penalty—God is dreadfully enraged at his offending offspring—determined to inflict on the criminal the vengeance due to his crimes, and to exact the last farthing of the helpless debtor—the debtor has nothing to pay, the criminal cannot be justly punished short of an eternity of misery—God will not relinquish one iota of his claim—what is to be done? Why, God concludes to *pay the debt himself*, for which he holds a legal claim, and to *suffer the penalty himself*, which his vindictive justice demands as a satisfaction for his violated law!

This view inevitably follows, so far as you maintain the *identity* of Christ with the eternal God. But so far as you deviate from this, and allow *two distinct beings*, or *personages*, represented, you involve yourself in other equally disagreeable dilemmas. You take away all the amiable attributes of the Father's character, to bestow them on the Son, or else deny that man has received any benefit through Christ's sufferings. For if the Father was inflexibly severe, and would not, even on repentance, receive his offending children into his favor, without exacting the most dreadful sufferings of an innocent being, where is there any just ground of gratitude and love to him? He has relinquished none of the debt—it has all been paid by our bondman: He has remitted none of the penalty—it has all been suffered by our substitute. Where then is there any mercy, condescension, love, or benevolence in God? There is none. And again, if man is still liable to be sentenced, by Christ the Judge, to never-ending misery, as the penalty of his crimes, (as many of your preachers and I believe yourself maintain,) where is there



any benefit derived to man in any possible manner by Christ's sufferings? It is true, the justice of God has been satisfied—his claim has been cancelled, so far as the *Father* is concerned; but the claim is *transferred* from the Father to the Son; and the latter has both the power and the right of enforcing the claim and inflicting the penalty to the full extent. Wherein then has man received any benefit?

But these are not all the difficulties and absurdities involved in your theory. For if sin be an infinite evil, and justly merit an infinite penalty, it were utterly impossible for Christ to have endured the full amount of this penalty during the short period in which he suffered—this were impossible, even allowing your Trinitarian notion of the absolute deity of Christ to be correct. For even you yourself will not allow that any thing more than his *human nature* suffered on the cross—you will not undertake to maintain the actual sufferings of the real Divinity. Therefore, the sufferings could not have been equivalent to the penalty demanded, according to your theory. But even admitting the deity of the sufferer, and that infinite torments were actually endured by the supreme Divinity, as an atonement for sin, and yet maintaining, according to your theory, the infinity of sin, the infinite guilt of every transgression, you will see the utter inadequacy of the atonement by sufferings, to remove and cancel sin. For the sufferings could have been *no more* than infinite; of course, could have merely *equalled*, or *balanced* (not cancelled, removed, or overcome) *one single sin* of *one single individual* of the whole human family—of course all the rest of the sins of that one individual, and all the sins of the whole world besides, must forever remain unatoned for, unless the Deity suffers as many deaths as there ever have been, and will be sins committed from the beginning of the world to the end of time! These, Sir, are a few of the inconsistencies and absurdities involved by the premises of your theory—infinite sin, infinite guilt, infinite penalties, infinite atonement, satisfaction and vicarious sufferings. Wrong premises invariably induce wrong conclusions. It is not, Sir, the doctrine of atonement sanctioned by Scripture and reason, that thus involves you in the absurd mysticisms, contradictory jargon, and perplexing

labyrinths above noticed; it is your attachment to creeds and dogmas of *men*, conceived in the dark ages of sin, and brought forth in the workings of the mystery of iniquity. Relinquish this attachment and take the Bible, explained by the light of reason, and the subject will appear clear, intelligible and beautiful.

Reason and revelation both unite in attesting the original, inherent, unpurchased and unpurchaseable, universal, everlasting and immutable benevolence of God—in attesting the perfect harmony of all his attributes, that “justice and judgment are the habitation of his throne, mercy and truth go before his face”—that justice and mercy can never be at variance—that no offerings, sacrifices, or sufferings of any being in the universe can divert either of them from the object both unitedly have in view—the securing the holiness and best good of his own creation—that he is a *JUST God AND a Saviour*.

The Scriptures, so far from teaching either the impunity of actual transgressors, or the infliction of the penalty due to sinners on a *substitute*, positively declare that God “will BY NO MEANS, clear the guilty.” “The soul that sinneth, *it shall die.*” “Every one shall die for his *own* iniquity—every man that eateth the sour grape, *his* teeth shall be set on edge.” “The son shall not die for the father, nor the father for the son.” But “*he* that doeth wrong, *shall receive* for the wrong that he hath done.” God, “without respect of persons, judgeth according to every man’s work.” “Who will render to *every man* according as his work shall be.” But so far from teaching that these punishments are infinite in degree and endless in duration, or precluding the idea of *forgiveness of sin*, in the scriptural sense of that phrase, forgiveness of it too without the consideration of an innocent person suffering in the place of the transgressor, the Scriptures clearly assert the contrary. The Psalmist declares, “Thou wast a God that forgavest them, though thou tookest vengeance of their inventions.” And God says, by the prophet Isaiah, “I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for *MINE OWN SAKE*, [not for the sake, or on account of the sufferings of another,] and will not remember thy sins.” Again, “Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will

have mercy upon him ; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." By a connected view of these and other similar passages, you will perceive the harmony of justice and mercy in the divine Being—that they go hand in hand in effecting the reformation and salvation of the sinner—that punishment is a personal concern, in which each sinner must bear his part and suffer for his own iniquities, and yet that divine forgiveness is necessary, and shall be experienced by the sinner, but only in and by his reformation and deliverance from the power and dominion of sin. An epitome of the whole process may be seen in the beautiful parable of the prodigal son—his sin, guilt, condemnation, misery, or punishment, repentance, reformation, forgiveness and happiness ; and all without the least possible change in the feelings, affections, or disposition of the father.

I shall reserve the further consideration of this subject till my next. In the mean time, believe me, dear Sir, as ever,  
Very respectfully yours, &c.

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## LETTER XIX.

*The same subject continued.*

DEAR SIR—There are many Christians, no doubt very honest and sincere, who believe with you in the vicarious sufferings and atonement of Christ, as the *sine qua non* of the Christian faith ; but who, nevertheless, have no distinct or definite ideas of salvation by Christ. It is to them all wrapt in mystery. They have a vague and inexplicable idea floating in their minds of the imputation of their sins to Christ, and of his righteousness to them by means of his suffering ; and of their own salvation, which they make to consist in exemption from deserved punishment—a kind of salvation, by the bye, nowhere taught in the Scriptures—but how, or in what manner this is morally effected, they cannot tell : and I very seriously doubt whether it is in your power to inform them.



To talk of salvation by Christ, or by the blood of Christ, without being made morally better, without individual reformation and personal holiness, or to talk of the salvation of sinners by mere faith in the *sufferings* of Christ in their stead, is to talk without meaning, and to assume principles, the utility and application of which, none can understand. I know there are a few passages of Scripture, which, if understood in a strictly literal sense, might seem to favor some part or parts of the theory I am now examining. But on comparing Scripture with Scripture, and taking into consideration the fact that the language and writings of all the oriental nations, but more especially those of the Hebrews, abounded with figurative expressions, with symbols, metaphors, parables and hyperboles, it will be perceived that nothing is said upon this subject, but what, when fully understood, is perfectly reconcileable with reason and sound philosophy. A few examples will now be introduced in confirmation of this statement, and calculated to have a bearing upon our subject.

John vi: 55, 56. Christ says, "My flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me and I in him." [In verse 51, he had said, "I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever. And the bread that I will give, is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." Now, why not understand and explain these words in a strictly literal sense? Why, because Christ himself has explained his meaning otherwise in verse 63, where he says, "It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life—" thereby clearly explaining the truth, according to reason and philosophy, that it was the *teachings*, the *doctrines*, the *principles of his religion*, and not the outward man or body of Christ—literally his *flesh* and *blood*—that possessed the quickening, nourishing, sustaining and life-giving power for the soul or mind of the believer, who received and obeyed his religion. And when he says, of the bread and wine in the supper, "this is my body"—"this is my blood"—nearly the same thing is intended, and Protestants are at no loss in understanding his meaning. And now, unless you are willing to allow that we should

use our reason in understanding and explaining all similar passages, that speak of the redeeming efficacy of the blood of Christ, you ought at once, to be consistent, to turn Catholic, and contend for the doctrine of *transubstantiation*.

1 Peter iii: 18. "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God:" That is, Christ, being just, hath once suffered in consequence of the sins, and in behalf of the unjust, that by his mediation he might reconcile and bring them to God. 2 Cor. v: 21. "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him"—That is, he hath permitted him who never committed any sin, to be accounted and *treated as a sinner*, that we might thereby be convinced of our sins, (Jude 15,) reconciled to God and conformed to his righteousness. Isa. liii: 4. "Surely he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows," &c. See this explained, Matt. viii: 16, 17. "And he cast out the spirits with his word, and healed all that were sick: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities and bare our sicknesses."—The removal, by Christ, of the natural evils and maladies to which mankind were subject, was a lively representation of his office and labors, in removing their moral maladies by enlightening their minds and reforming their lives. The next verse in Isaiah, you doubtless consider one of the strongest contained in all the Bible in favor of your theory of substitution. "But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed." This verse may be thus paraphrased: He was wounded in consequence of our transgressions; he was bruised on account of our iniquities: he endured the chastisement consequent upon his undertaking to effect our peace; and though he suffers many stripes, yet by his labors we are healed. The language of the above text is highly figurative and symbolical, as are also many other texts relating to the subject; yet I think I have given the sense intended by the inspired writer. This will appear further obvious by considering the 11th verse, which declares, that "by his *knowledge* [not barely by his sufferings] shall my righteous servant justify [the] many, [or

the multitude,] i. e. by the knowledge which he will impart, he shall bring them to justification; "for he shall bear their iniquities," i. e. remove them, the same as his bearing their sicknesses signified his removing them—"God sent him to bless you in turning away every one of you from his iniquities." Acts iii: 26.

"Christ (to use the beautiful language of the amiable and justly celebrated Richard Wright,) is said to redeem us to God by his blood, because it cost him his life to bring the Gospel, with all its light and blessings, to the world; because he patiently submitted to all his sufferings, in pursuance of the great object he had before him, the salvation of men; because his death was the confirmation of his testimony, and he sealed the truth and grace of God with his blood; and because in consequence of his obedience, even unto death he is rewarded with the dignity and power to which he is exalted, as a Prince and a Saviour, in the exercise of which he dispenses redemption by the Gospel. No rational idea can be formed of the way in which we are redeemed by the blood of Christ, otherwise than as his death stands connected with the Gospel, and his ministration at the head of the dispensation. Thus it appears that we have redemption in Christ Jesus as we have it in his Gospel; he came and revealed it, he lost his life in making it known, he is appointed by the Father to dispense it, and we enjoy it so far as we conform to his teaching and example.

"The redemption which we have in Christ Jesus, is not described as a legal transaction between him and the Father, a settling of accounts with divine justice by the payment of our debts, or as consisting in removing by his death the encumbrances which stopped the course of divine mercy, and so rendering God propitious to sinners; but as consisting in our actual deliverance from ignorance, condemnation of conscience, moral pollution and death.

"It is by the Gospel we are actually redeemed. By its light we are delivered back from a state of ignorance and blindness of mind. By its teaching and influence we are freed from inward condemnation, from the love, power and practice of sin, and, by what it reveals respecting a state of immortality, we are animated with the prospect of redemption from death and the grave."



The *Gospel* of Christ "is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth," by being the means of enlightening the mind with the knowledge of God, and delivering it from the love of sin and the bondage of iniquity.

The atonement of Christ, therefore, cannot be properly considered as a sacrifice which God required to satisfy the claims of his justice, to render him placable, or reconcile him to his disobedient children. So far from it, the only passage in all the New Testament where the word *atonement* occurs, speaks of it as being received, not by God, but by man. The truth is, God never required any atonement on his part to reconcile him to his creatures, for the plain reason that he never was irreconciled; and if he had been, could never have become reconciled without a *change* taking place in absolute *immutability*! Man was the only irreconciled party—the only one needing the atonement; and God, so far from *receiving*, actually *gives* the atonement, or the means of effecting it. For it should be recollected that the word *atonement* (*katallage*) literally signifies *reconciliation*, and is uniformly so rendered throughout the New Testament, except in Romans v: 11, where the apostle says, "we also joy in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom WE HAVE NOW RECEIVED THE ATONEMENT," (reconciliation.) "For God so *loved* (was not so *angry* at) the world, that he *gave* his only begotten Son," &c. "God commendeth his *love* towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, (not himself to the world,) not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation," (atonement.)

Here then we discover a scriptural, rational, consistent, and philosophical view of the atonement—a view that exhibits the character of God and of Christ in the most amiable light. Here no flagrant act of cruelty and vengeance, inflicted on the innocent to give impunity to the guilty, appears, called by the false name of *justice*, or *satisfaction to the claims of justice*, at which reason is shocked and all the better feelings of the heart revolt. No change or alteration takes place in the immutable Jehovah—no other fountain of mercy is opened, save that originating in the

eternal, unbought and immortal benevolence of God, "who hath saved us and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began; but is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel." 2 Tim. i: 9, 10.

The subjects of a wise, powerful and benevolent king, revolt from their allegiance, become disaffected and alienated in their minds; and forgetting the character and the many acts of kindness they have received from their sovereign, become determined rebels against his government. What does the king do to reclaim them? Does he take his darling and only son, and publicly execute him, in the most cruel manner, in presence of those rebels, and then tell them that he has taken ample vengeance on them in the sufferings of his darling child, as their *substitute* and *proxy*—that he has delighted himself in glutting his vengeance, and that the justice of his violated law is fully satisfied by his death, and *therefore* they are pardoned? No; for this, so far from reclaiming the rebels, would only convince them of the cruelty and injustice of the king.—True, they might admire the self-devotion, innocence, and patient suffering of the son, but they must shudder at the strange barbarity and inhuman cruelty of the father, and could have no confidence in the justice of his laws and the equity of his government. No; a very different course is pursued by the wise and good king. He sends messengers of truth and mercy to the alienated rebels, to expostulate with them for their conduct, convince them of their errors and mistakes, to assure them of his equity and benevolence, of his kind intentions towards them, and solicitude for their welfare, and to persuade them to return to their allegiance. They despise and maltreat these messengers—he sends others of like character, and they meet with a similar reception. At length, to convince them of his kindness and benevolent intentions, he sends his only son, the perfect image of his own person and character. The son flies to the rebels on wings of mercy, with outstretched arms of compassion, he entreats them to return to their allegiance and to happiness, assuring them that his

father is ready to receive and forgive them—he finds them sick, wounded, and dying—he heals the sick, binds up the wounded, and saves the dying—he does every thing that benevolence can suggest to convince them of his love and kindness, which faithfully represents that of his father, the king, assuring them, that notwithstanding their rebellion and ingratitude, the king is still kind to them, and still furnishes them with the means of subsistence. But they are deaf to all his expostulations and entreaties, and blind to every act of kindness he performs; and at length, with wicked and malicious hands, they seize and slay him. But still bent on fulfilling his message of mercy, the dying prince blesses his murderers in death, and sends a petition to his father on their behalf, saying, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” This last act of the son is one of the most powerful and persuasive motives that could have been offered to the rebels—they are, many of them, deeply affected by the scene—conscience upbraids them with a sense of their deep guilt and ingratitude—they exclaim “If such be the benevolence and mercy of the son, what must be that of the father himself who sent him to reclaim us?” Realizing their miserable condition in their rebellious state, they cry out in the language of the prodigal, when he came to himself, “How many hired servants of the king have bread enough and to spare, and we perish with hunger; we will arise and go to the king, confess our faults, and seek his pardon.” And ultimately, all the rebel hosts shall be convinced of their folly and wickedness, and return to their allegiance and duty. Thus, too, redeemed from their ignorance by the instructions and precepts of the son, melted into contrition, and cured of their alienation in view of the sufferings and philanthropy of the innocent Jesus, and the exhibitions of the Father’s mercy, shall all the alienated sons and daughters of the human family, “the ransomed of the Lord, return and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.”

Having noticed and given my views of the *nature* and *design* of the atonement, I shall next proceed, as was proposed, to consider its extent and efficacy. But lest I weary your patience with too long epistles, I shall reserve what I have to say on this part of the subject, for a future number.

Yours, very respectfully.



## LETTER XX.

*The same subject continued.*

DEAR SIR—I shall now proceed, as was proposed, *Secondly*, To consider your views of the *extent* and *efficacy* of the atonement. And here I observe that I have no other guide or directory to the knowledge of your views, but your Confession of Faith. It is true, your church and clergy are now divided into what are called the Old and New School, and differ, one class from the other, very widely respecting some doctrines, and particularly that of the atonement; some of them zealously maintaining the universality of the atonement—that Christ died for all, salvation is made possible for all, the Gospel should be freely proclaimed to all, and all *may* come and share its blessings if they will. Mr. Beman, of Troy, seems to be of this class. And Dr. Ely says, “the *greater part* of our ministers teach that the merit of Christ’s sufferings was *infinitely sufficient*, not only for the salvation of *all mankind*, but for *millions of worlds of sinners*.” True, the Doctor “holds this opinion to be false” and dangerous, and warns his brethren against it, declaring that it “might naturally lead the holders of it, either to the doctrine of universal salvation, or the denial of the actual redemption of God’s elect.” Dr. Ely is a New School man, and this is a New School doctrine which he condemns. Hence, I perceive, that your New School men differ as much among *themselves*, as the Old and New do from *each other*. But to your Confession:

That asserts, that “they who are elected, being fallen in Adam, are redeemed in Christ, are effectually called unto faith in Christ by his spirit working in due season; are justified, adopted, sanctified, and kept by his power through faith, unto salvation. *Neither are any other redeemed by Christ, effectually called, justified, adopted, sanctified, and saved, but the elect only.* The rest of mankind God was pleased.....to pass by and to ordain them to dishonor and wrath, for their sin, to the praise of his glorious justice.” *Confession*, chap. iii. § 6, 7. See also the

*whole chapter.* "To all those for whom Christ hath purchased redemption, he doth *certainly* and *effectually* apply and communicate the same." Chap. viii: § 8. "Others, *not elected*, although they may be called by the ministry of the word, and may have some common operations of the spirit, yet they never truly come to Christ, and therefore *cannot* be saved; much less can men, not professing the Christian religion, be saved in any other way whatsoever, be they never so diligent to frame their lives according to the light of nature, and the law of that religion they do profess; and to assert and maintain that they may, is very pernicious, and to be detested." Chap. x: § 4.

I might proceed to multiply quotations from your Confession of Faith, of the same import as the above; but what has been quoted is sufficient for my purpose. These extracts show that, unless you have renounced your Confession, you believe Christ died to redeem only a *part*, an *elect* and *chosen number*, of mankind—that the rest were left to perish in hopeless and everlasting ruin—that the means of grace or the opportunity of salvation, were and ever will be withheld from them—nay more, that, to prevent the *possibility* of their being saved, they were "fore-ordained to everlasting death," "ordained to dishonor and wrath."

With these things in view, let me ask, dear Sir, is it not absurd and nonsensical, nay worse, is it not insult and mockery, to pretend that any who are not saved are to blame therefor?—to pretend that it is their own fault if they do not get to heaven?—that all *may* get religion and be saved if they will?—or to offer salvation freely to all?—And was not the annunciation of the angel to the shepherds, insult and mockery, when he declared, "I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people"? and was not the command of Jesus to his apostles, equal insult and mockery, "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel [good news] to every creature"—knowing as he must, on the supposition of the truth of this doctrine, that for a large, or the largest portion of mankind, he had never tasted death—that *no* means for their redemption did or ever would exist, but that on the contrary the ban of everlasting proscription, the decree of endless damnation, had from eternity been pronounced against them? How a

man of your good sense and native benevolence of heart, *with such a creed*, can mock at the miseries of the reprobate, and insult the misfortunes of the non-elect by any such pretences, I am wholly unable to conceive. For it is certain, if the creed be true, the proffers of mercy and salvation to the non-elect, the non-redeemed, are but insult and mockery. It were no greater—no, not so great—an insult, to pluck out a man's eyes and then tell him to behold the beauties of the landscape; or to cut off his legs and then ask him to run a race; or his hands and tell him to defend himself. If your Confession of Faith is true, and is to be understood according to the most obvious import of its language; then you know, and I know, and God knows, that the reprobate, the non-elect, the non-redeemed, can do nothing to save themselves, and neither God, nor Christ, nor any other being in the universe will do any thing to save them, and consequently *their salvation is impossible*.

I am inclined to think, however, that like Mr. Beman and most of your New School men, you preach and profess to believe, that *Christ died for all men*, the plain and positive declarations of your Confession to the contrary notwithstanding. But how you reconcile your *confession* and *profession*, I am wholly unable to conceive—whether, like some of your brethren, you undertake to maintain a *universal atonement* and a *partial redemption*; that though the sacrificial death of Christ was *sufficient*, and was actually *made*, for the *whole* world, yet it will be *efficaciously applied* only to a *part*; or whether a universal atonement was made at *random*, and the application of its benefits left to depend on *contingent circumstances*. But you doubtless saw clearly and truly, that the preaching of a partial atonement and particular election and reprobation would make no proselytes, and that you must adopt these or similar views, in order to give some color of plausibility to your universal calls and invitations to repent, and your proffers of mercy and salvation to all who would believe. But I must confess I can see no more consistency or harmony in your system by the adoption of either of these views, than in the narrow and rigid system of partial atonement, first noticed. No, Sir, there is not even as much consistency. For if I were going to maintain a partial



salvation, I would most certainly take the ground of a partial atonement, and endeavor to maintain consistent and rigid Calvinism throughout. I would say in the language of Dr. Ely, "I renounce all vain speculations about *a merit* never to be rewarded, and *a sufficiency* never to be actually applied to the salvation of sinners"—"That obedience which was not rendered for a particular individual can never be *applicable* to his benefit; and whatever Christ has *merited*, that shall he receive from the hands of perfect justice, even to the salvation of the last sinner, the chastisement of whose peace he bore. That Jesus by redeeming his people has deserved some other honor than that of their salvation, I admit; 'wherefore God also hath highly exalted him,' and made him *head over all things* to the church; but had he *merited* the pardon of all sinners, by actually suffering to the full satisfaction of divine justice for all sinners, then all sinners would certainly have been pardoned, and the devil himself would have escaped everlasting punishment." Thus far your brother Ely. See his letter to Dr. Willson.

The Doctor is consistent with himself, so far, at least, as his views of atonement and redemption are concerned and relate to each other. But the new-fangled Presbyterian doctrine of Arminio-Calvinism, conjured up to suit the times, has so many short turns and intricate windings, that its own most zealous partizans get lost in its mazes, not unfrequently fall into the ditch, and pull in with them those that they are leading. At least I have never yet found one who could reconcile its palpable contradictions and inconsistencies. Perhaps most of them would explain it in a similar manner to what a young man of your communion did, with whom I conversed on the subject about a year since.

Ascertaining who I was, and what were my sentiments, he seemed very solicitous to enter into a discussion of doctrinal points. I was perfectly willing to gratify him. In return to a similar question he had proposed to me, I inquired,

S. You are a Presbyterian, I suppose?

Presb. Yes.

S. Of course you believe in the Presbyterian Confession of Faith?

P. Yes.

S. That is, you believe that, "by the decree of God, for the manifestation of his glory, some men and angels are predestinated unto everlasting life, and others foreordained to everlasting death"—that "these angels and men, thus predestinated and foreordained, are particularly and unchangeably designed; and their number is so certain and definite that it cannot be either increased or diminished"—that "those—

P. No, no! I don't believe that, nor any thing like it—I believe Christ died for all—all may believe, repent, come to Christ, and be saved, if they will—it is their own fault if they don't—God has done all that is necessary, on his part, for their salvation.

S. What! do you deny your Confession of Faith so soon?

P. Well, I don't believe in election and reprobation. I believe in a full atonement and free salvation.

S. You believe Christ died for all men without exception?

P. Yes—yes, he died for all that will believe on him.

S. Ah! for all that will *believe* on him! And did he die for none else?

P. No, of course he did not die for those that *won't* believe.

S. Can any be saved for whom he did not die?

P. No, "there is none other name," &c.

S. Did Christ know from all eternity, who would, and who would not believe on him?

P. Yes, certainly, he knew all things.

S. And he died for those that he knew from all eternity would believe on him, and for none others?

P. Yes.

S. Well, Sir, will you have the goodness to explain these things to me, so that I may understand you? You first say that *Christ died for all men without exception*—next, that he died for *all that will believe on him* and *none others*—that he knew *from all eternity* who *would*, and who would *not believe*—that he died for none that he knew would not believe! How, then, did he die for *all*? You say God has done all that was necessary for salvation on his part—that salvation is free for all—all may be saved if they will; and then you say, none can be saved for whom Christ did not die, and he died for those only that he knew

would believe. Will you tell me how those *can* be saved, who, Christ knew from all eternity, would not believe, and for whom, consequently, he did not die?

P. I—I—I don't know as I can answer your questions—I *have not thought much upon the subject*.

And now, dear Sir, let me ask if *you* can answer these questions—and if so, how? I very seriously doubt whether you will be able to extricate your brother from his difficulty. If you can, I shall, and I presume he will, feel greatly obliged to you for the favor. But is it not the case with many, very many, of these modern Arminio-Calvinists, that *they* “*have not thought much upon the subject*”?

It is true, as stated in a former letter, I cannot conceive, if sin be infinite, and therefore *every* sin an infinite evil, how any *one* of the human family can ever be saved by vicarious suffering or substitution; as the atonement, even when viewed in this light, can be *no more than one infinite* employed to remove an *infinite number of infinities*. But at the same time, to be consistent, we must admit that if such atonement could save one sinner, it could save *all sinners* for whom Christ suffered. And bating the infinity of sin, which perhaps, like Dr. Ely, you have renounced, there can be no difficulty, even on your scheme, in saving the whole world, if Christ died for all. Dr. Ely says, “I admit that sin is *not* an *infinite* evil, and that the punishment of it never was nor will be infinite; for *infinite* means without any bounds—that which is absolutely infinite cannot be increased. Infinity is an attribute of no being but God.”

Leaving the foregoing for your serious consideration, I shall now proceed to remark, that how much soever you and I may differ in our views of the nature and design of the atonement—whether we view it as designed to placate the divine Being, render him merciful and forgiving, reconcile him to man, and open a way thereby for the salvation of sinners; or whether we view it as an expression and commendation of the love of God to men, (Rom. v: 6–11; 2 Cor. v: 14–19; 1 John iv: 8–21,) designed to reconcile them to God, overcome and destroy the enmity and sinful propensities of their hearts, enlighten their understandings, and exert an all-pervading and all-powerful moral influence in bringing them to God, and to the light



and enjoyment of his salvation; we doubtless both believe, or profess and really think we believe, that great and incalculable benefits result to mankind from the atonement, in whatever light it is considered. By you, these benefits are confined to a part of mankind; by me, extended to all. And I shall now proceed to prove from the Scriptures, 1. That these benefits were intended for all mankind without exception, and, 2. That the object intended shall be fully attained, and all mankind blessed with salvation in Christ.

*First.* St. Paul says, "For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that HE DIED FOR ALL, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them and rose again." 2 Cor. v: 14, 15. "For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a RANSOM FOR ALL, to be testified in due time." 1 Tim. ii: 5, 6. "That he by the grace of God should TASTE DEATH FOR EVERY MAN." Heb. ii: 9. "And having made peace through the blood of his cross, *by him to reconcile ALL THINGS* to himself; by him I say, whether things in earth or things in heaven." Col. i: 20. St. John says of Christ, "He is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the WHOLE WORLD." 1 Epistle ii: 2. How expressions of greater universality than these could be found or employed, I am utterly unable to conceive.—If the phrases *all, all men, every man, the whole world, all things in earth and heaven*, do not express universality, I should be at a loss to know what phrases would. And if Calvinists who maintain that Christ will save all for whom he died, will only preach to the people that Christ will save *all, all men, every man, all things, the whole world*, I have no doubt but they would immediately be pronounced rank Universalists by all who heard them.

*Secondly.* The object intended shall be fully attained, and all mankind shall be blessed with salvation in Christ. To substantiate this position, numerous declarations of Scripture may be cited; but I shall content myself with a few only. The prophet Isaiah says, "The pleasure of the Lord SHALL PROSPER in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul and SHALL BE SATISFIED." Isa. liii: 10, 11.

For whom, in his travail, did Christ suffer? For all men. Will he then be satisfied with any thing short of the salvation of all? No. But he *shall be satisfied*. What is "the pleasure of the Lord"? "Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord God; and not that he should return from his ways and live? For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God; wherefore, turn and live ye." Ezek. xviii: 23, 32. "God will have all men to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth." 1 Tim. ii: 3, 4. Well, whatever the "pleasure of the Lord" is, it *shall prosper* in Christ's hand. The call is universal to all men. "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." Isa. xlv: 22. And this shall prove an effectual call to all, for he says, "As the rain cometh down, and the snow, from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, &c., so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void; but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it." Isa. lv: 10, 11. Again, the Father says, "I shall give thee the Heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." Ps. ii: 8.—"The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand." And "all that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in nowise cast out. For I came down from heaven not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me, I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day." "Thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou has given him." John iii: 35, vi: 37-39, xvii: 2. "And other sheep I have which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold and one shepherd"—"And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." John x: 16, 28, 29. Christ "must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet. Death the last enemy shall be destroyed—and when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall

the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all." "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." 1 Cor. xv : 22-28. For "God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name : that in the name of **Jesus** every knee should bow in heaven, in earth, and under the earth ; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father." Phil. ii : 9-11.

But enough. I stop quoting—not for want of materials, but because I have already cited sufficient to establish, as I should suppose, beyond all controversy, the position contended for, viz. that Christ "shall see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied"—the universal extent of his reign, the entire success of his mission and labors, the complete triumph of his principles and religion in bringing the atonement (or *reconciliation*, which is synonymous with it) and consequent salvation to all mankind. To a mind untrammelled with prejudice and preconceived opinion, and indeed, to all who profess to take the Bible as the man of their counsel, I cannot see how this subject can be made plainer than it is by the preceding quotations, or how any two propositions can be more clearly established than these—1. That Christ died for all, and 2. That he will save all he died for. I leave the subject for your serious and prayerful consideration, praying that the Lord may direct us both into all truth, make us honest and faithful in declaring it to our fellow-men, and ever active in obedience to its holy requisitions. Adieu till I write again.

Yours, very sincerely.



## LETTER XXI.

### *On Presbyterian Infallibility.*

DEAR SIR—After having pointed out so many palpable inconsistencies and contradictions in the Presbyterian Confession of Faith, it hardly excites any additional surprise in me to observe in that Confession the *assumption of virtual infallibility, in the most glaring terms*, by your church, accompanied also with the modest and wary declaration, that “all Synods or Councils since the apostles’ times, whether general or particular, may err, and many have erred ; therefore they are not to be made the rule of faith or practice, but to be used as a help in both.” Confession chap. xxxi : § 3.

The above declaration was, no doubt, very *wisely* inserted ; as it will naturally tend to allay suspicion with the superficial reader, and persuade him of the meekness of your sect, and the great modesty of your pretensions ; while, at the same time, the assumption of virtual infallibility, or *the power of certainly deciding right, in all cases, by the officers of your church*, contained in another chapter of your Confession, will, on the other hand, give a peculiar *dignity* and *grace* to all your decisions and excommunications—a grace and dignity equal, if not superior, to a real bull of excommunication from His Holiness, the very Pope of Rome. And here, you have altogether the advantage of the church of Rome. You enjoy all the privileges and immunities of *infallibility*, without the absurdity, in so many words, of laying claim to it, or the trouble and difficulty of defending it. It is perhaps as great a privilege to be *always in the right*, without claiming *infallibility*, as to be always in the wrong, *with it* : and that while the church of Rome has a right to maintain that it *cannot err*, yours can, with more modesty and equal truth, affirm that it *never does*.

It is true, yours is not the only Protestant sect that lays claim to this prerogative ; but few of them have, however, asserted it in as broad and confident terms as yours. In

the 30th chapter of your Confession, we have the following declaration :—

“ The Lord Jesus, as king and head of his church, hath therein appointed a government in the hands of church officers, distinct from the civil magistrate. To these officers the *keys of the kingdom of heaven* are committed, by virtue whereof they have *power to retain and remit sins, to shut that kingdom against the impenitent*, both by the word and censures ; and to *open it unto penitent sinners*, by the ministry of the Gospel, and by absolution from censures, as occasion shall require.”

If, by the phrase, “ kingdom of heaven,” in the above article, were meant the *Presbyterian church*, and that only, there could be no just ground of complaint, nor could any reasonable person charge you or the framers of it with any undue assumption of power. But by all Presbyterian preachers, whom I have ever heard speak on the subject, and all those whose writings I have ever read, the phrase is used to designate the kingdom of glory in the spiritual and eternal world ; although this is by no means its usual acceptance in the New Testament. Understanding, therefore, the phrase, “ kingdom of heaven,” in the sense usually given to it by Presbyterians, i. e. as signifying the kingdom of glory in the eternal world, I would seriously and respectfully ask, whether the Pope of Rome ever claimed any higher authority, or greater power over the souls and eternal destinies of men, or virtually any greater infallibility in his decisions, than the above extract from your Confession allows the officers of your church to be invested with ?

That your church have claimed the high prerogative of deciding not only the eternal destiny of souls in the future world, with infallible and unalterable certainty, but also of deciding what punishment should be inflicted on the *body*, in time, and have been disposed (contrary to the tenor of the first part of the above quotation) to call in the aid of the “ civil magistrate” to enforce their penalties, is also abundantly evident, from the conduct of John Calvin to the innocent Michael Servetus ; the persecutions carried on against reputed heretics, in England, by Presbyterians, in the time of Cromwell ; the hanging of Quakers and witches, and the banishing of Baptists, in this country ; as

also by numerous other equally convincing and demonstrative evidences that might be named. And even to make *infallible Papists* feel the *infallible authority* and power of *Presbyterianism*, your pious predecessors enacted laws, justifying and requiring the seizure of Catholic priests "without a warrant," forbidding their residence in the "land of steady habits," and requiring them to be "banished; and to suffer death on their return." It is true that these civil and corporeal penalties have, from necessity, been dispensed with by your church, since the adoption of our Constitution and republican form of government. And in your present Confession you say, that "God alone is Lord of the conscience," and that ecclesiastical "assemblies ought not to possess any civil jurisdiction, nor to inflict any civil penalties." These declarations, however, appear (considering what your predecessors did when they had the power) to have been made more from necessity than choice. And that the officers of the Presbyterian church have claimed, and still do claim, to be lords of the conscience, the above declaration to the contrary notwithstanding, is obvious from the fact, that many virtuous and conscientious Christians have been excommunicated from their fellowship, and sentenced by them "to the pains of hell forever"—have been excommunicated, not for those offences for which Christ commanded the primitive disciples to withdraw fellowship from their members, not for heinous and scandalous sins, not for immoral conduct, not for a disbelief of the Gospel, but *because they believed precisely what the Gospel asserts*, that Jesus Christ is the *Son of God*, (instead of being the God of whom he is the Son,) and the *Saviour of the world*, (instead of being the Saviour only of an elect number out of the world,)—because they believed "the Lord is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works," and that he "will not cast off forever." Scores, nay hundreds, of examples may be adduced, of the most exemplary and pious members of your churches being excluded from fellowship, for no other reason than that they believed in "the restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began." Acts iii: 21.

These things clearly show that the officers of your church consider themselves infallible judges of truth and



error, right and wrong, and that too, independently of the word of God, and contrary to the fundamental principle of Protestantism, that "the Bible, the Bible only, is the creed, and contains the religion of Protestants." For those individuals excommunicated, stood ready to prove the doctrines they had embraced, *by the Bible, and that alone.*—But no; this was not good authority—the Confession of Faith of *your church* must be the standard by which to try them; and if they came not up to that human production, though ever so devout, exemplary, and sincere believers of the Gospel, they must receive the sentence of excommunication, and then be told that those who pronounce it, have "*the keys of the kingdom of heaven, by virtue whereof they have power to retain and remit sins, to shut that kingdom against the impenitent, and open it unto the penitent,*" &c.—virtually telling them they must repent of having believed what conscience and the Bible tell them is true, before they can have the use of *your key*, by which to open the kingdom of heaven that is now shut against them!

How these things appear to you and others, I cannot say; but they appear to me as the climax of absurdity, and worthy only of the darkest ages of Popery, and minds as dark with bigotry as they. They are at war with reason and Scripture, and directly opposed to other declarations contained in your Confession. In the "*Form of Government*" of your church, chap. i: "*Preliminary Principles,*" you say, "God alone is Lord of the conscience; and hath left it free from the doctrine and commandments of men, which are in any thing contrary to his word, or beside it in matters of faith or worship: therefore they consider the rights of private judgment, in all matters that respect religion, as universal and unalienable"—"That all church power, whether exercised by the body in general, or in the way of representation by delegated authority, is only ministerial and declarative; that is to say, that the Holy Scriptures are the only rule of faith and manners, that no church judicatory ought to pretend to make laws to bind the conscience in virtue of their own authority; and that all their decisions should be founded on the revealed will of God." But, Sir, what is "the revealed will of God," on which all decisions should be founded? St. Paul says, "God will have

all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth." 1 Tim. ii: 4. But the moment any one in your church presumes to believe this testimony of inspiration, that moment you pronounce him a heretic, and exclude him from the fellowship of your church. Is this founding your decisions on the word of God? Is it not, rather, setting that at defiance, and establishing a standard separate from and in opposition to it? And where, in such proceedings, is the evidence that you consider "God alone as Lord of the conscience"—that he hath left it free from the doctrine and commandments of men—and that "the rights of private judgment in all matters that respect religion are universal and unalienable"? There is none; and it is mockery to pretend that you respect "the rights of private judgment," and are willing the "conscience" should be "left free from the doctrine and commandments of men." The officers of your church claim to be the keepers and lords of the consciences of all that come within its pale, and to decide on the eternal destinies of any of their members who may chance to dissent, not from the Bible, but from the doctrine and commandments of men—to decide against them, pronouncing them "excluded from the kingdom of heaven," with the vain and presumptuous expectation that God will sanction their decision, and "bind in heaven" what they have "bound on earth."

Is it reasonable to conclude, because the Saviour promised the divine guidance and sanction to the apostles, in all their public ministry in the church, (Matt. xvi: 19, and xviii: 18; John xx: 23,) that, therefore, the officers of your church in this remote age, with so much frailty and sinfulness about them, and so many dissensions among themselves, have the same infallibility, and can be as *sure* of the sanction of Heaven as the apostles? Was not the apostolic age, the age of miracles? Were not the apostles inspired and endued with the power of healing the sick, casting out demons, &c.? And was not the Holy Spirit with them, agreeably to the promise of Christ, to lead and guide them into all truth, to teach them at all times what to say, to bring to their remembrance all things, to assist them in all their ministry, and to be with them "always, even to the end of the age"? And if they were inspired and guided by the Holy Spirit in all things, of course,

Heaven approved and sanctioned all they said and did. But with the completion of the Scriptures and the age of the apostles, ended the days of miracles and of extraordinary inspiration. Nor was it necessary they should continue longer. For the purpose of God, for which they were given, was answered ; and in all subsequent ages of the church, the infallible doings of the apostles, being guided by the spirit of God, and the infallible rules they have left us, of truth, and duty, are sufficient, without frail, sinful, and uninspired mortals of the present age pretending to give infallible decisions of the eternal destinies of their fellow-beings, or setting up any other standard of faith, aside from the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

In conclusion, permit me to say, Rev. Sir, that until the present unhappy difficulties and divisions in your church, both about doctrines and practices, be healed, and its officers and Doctors of Divinity be agreed among themselves, what, on the one hand is truth and duty, and on the other hand, error and sin, it will appear much more modest and becoming to discard all pretensions to infallibility, either in doctrine or practice. It will be indicative of much more meekness and humility, and even more of the Christian temper, to allow that high Heaven alone can rightly judge of the hearts, and determine the eternal destinies of men—and that since the days of inspiration and miracles have ceased, “there may be so much infirmity and indiscretion and wickedness of man,” in establishing other confessions of faith, and other rules for trying heretics, than those laid down in the Bible, “as to render the general evils which flow from this infirmity, indiscretion and wickedness of man, greater than the local and temporary advantages” resulting from the excommunication of heretics.

Very respectfully yours.



## LETTER XXII.

### *On Universal Salvation.*

DEAR SIR—I shall now call your attention to the doctrine of impartial grace, and the final holiness and happiness of all mankind. Having passed in review the most prominent features of Presbyterianism, and shown, as I conceive, its most distinguishing doctrines to be without foundation in Scripture, reason, and the nature of things, I trust you will bear with me a little longer, while I present you with some considerations, which I conceive to be of great importance, relative to that doctrine which has long been unpopular in the world, and “every where spoken against,” but which I firmly believe to be the truth of God, and of which I am known to be the public and uniform advocate.

The subject must be allowed to be one of the most deeply interesting and important subjects that ever engrossed the attention of man. The doctrine, whether true or false, cannot be deemed beneath your notice, or the notice of any reasonable and philanthropic mind. For what subject, dear Sir, let me ask, can possess a more deeply thrilling interest, or be of more solemn and affecting moment, than that relating to the character of the great Jehovah, and the final and eternal destiny of countless millions of his sentient offspring?

It is not my design to enter largely into the exhibition, or discussion, or defence of Universalism at this time, for the following reasons: There are now so many publications, sermons, essays, treatises, &c., before the public, and within your reach, that treat the subject more at large and in all its various ramifications, that the labor seems unnecessary. I have already introduced some of its leading features and arguments in a former letter, while treating on the doctrine of endless misery—and I have neither time nor room to be diffuse here. I shall therefore confine myself to a few important particulars, tending to show the claims of this doctrine to a more serious and favorable consideration, than I have reason to believe you have yet given it.

It is to me one of the most surprising and unaccountable things in the world, that a doctrine so benevolent in its nature, so sublime in its details, so expansive in its charities, so cheering in its prospects, so completely adapted to the moral wants of mankind, so holy in its precepts, and so salutary in its influence upon the heart,—should be viewed with such abhorrence and dread, much more that it should be viewed and treated with such hatred, animosity and spite, by many people in this country—yea, by many religionists too, who profess to be both philanthropic and pious. I know of but one parallel case in all the history of our race—it is the fact that our blessed Master received similar treatment from the religionists of his age. He who “went about doing good,” preaching “peace on earth and good will to men,” healing the sick and comforting the afflicted, was viewed with jealousy and hatred, and accused by the religionists of that age, of being a disturber of the public peace, a great sinner, and an enemy of religion. He who cast out devils was accused of being possessed of a devil—he who came to save the world, was crucified by that world. . So, Universalism, which teaches the boundless benevolence of God, and calls on men to love him with all the heart for the great love wherewith he hath loved them, and to love and do good to all men as they have opportunity, because all men are brethren, children of the same all-benignant Parent, is charged with being an enemy to true piety and godliness. The doctrine which teaches the final end of sin, and the universal prevalence of holiness, is accused of encouraging sin and promoting iniquity. That system which teaches the salvation of the whole world through Jesus Christ, is charged with having originated with the devil, who is said to seek the damnation of the whole world! I must think and say of such opposing characters now, as Jesus did of those in his day—“they know not what they do.” But leaving this point, I will now proceed to the considerations proposed.

1. Universalism is the only doctrine that harmonizes with the attributes which all denominations allow God to possess. It is allowed on all hands, that God is *infinitely wise, powerful, and benevolent*. If so, his wisdom cannot err respecting either the end or the means—He can be ignorant of no event that ever has or ever shall transpire—

with him there can be no casualty, doubt, nor uncertainty—nor can there be any failure in the accomplishment of all or any of his plans or purposes; because, knowing the means necessary to accomplish them, he must know whether they were adapted to, and would attain the end designed. His power being omnipotent, can never be either defeated or successfully opposed. He speaks, and it is done—he commands, and it stands fast—he doeth all his pleasure in the armies of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth—none can stay his hand. His benevolence extends to all, and seeks the happiness of all. If there be one being in existence to whom his love or goodness does not extend, then it is *limited*, consequently is *not infinite*. But the voice of revelation expressly declares, “*the Lord is good to all.*” What, then, let me ask, shall prevent the ultimate happiness of all mankind? If it do not take place, it must be either because God *cannot* save all, or because he *will not*. If you say, 1. that he *cannot* save all, you deny the infinity of his power, and at once make him an impotent and dependent being. If you say, 2. that he *will not*, you deny his goodness and make him even worse than men; for all good men say they *would* save all *if they could*, and they are doing all they can to effect the salvation of their fellow-beings. There is, therefore, no other alternative but to say, 3, that he *can* save all, and *will* save all; or else turn around and deny one or more of the fundamental attributes of God. And this last is virtually done by every system of Limitarianism ever preached in the world.

If any being suffer endless misery, God must have fore-ordained it, and consequently been governed by infinite hatred toward that individual; or he must have foreknown it, and this would make him just as bad; for he could have had no other end in view in his creation than that which he knew would be the result, viz. misery. If you say the agency of the creature has led him to endless misery, I ask, did not God know this when he created him? If he did not, he was very ignorant, and besides, he created him at an infinite risk. If he did, then for what purpose did he create him *but* for misery? Perhaps you may here say I have forgotten one attribute of God, viz. his *justice*. No, Sir, I have not forgotten it. Nor have I forgotten that



God is *one*, and his *name one*. "God is *love*," and he can have no attribute opposed to his nature. God is *good*, and can have no attribute opposed to his goodness. He cannot be divided against himself. His justice and goodness are not opposing principles. None will deny that goodness seeks the happiness of its objects; none can deny that endless misery would be opposed to the happiness of its subjects. Justice, therefore, which is but a modification of goodness itself, cannot require the endless misery of man. Justice can never require the infliction of an unmerciful punishment; nor can goodness withhold the infliction of a just punishment. Justice and judgment are the habitation of God's throne; mercy and truth go before his face. Mercy and justice in God, are no more opposed to each other than charity and equity among men—or parental affection and salutary government in families.—"Whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth," &c. All are partakers of his chastening, therefore he loveth all. But he will not always chide, neither will he keep his anger forever. He doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men, but chastens them for their profit, that they may be partakers of his holiness. O, how lovely and amiable does the justice of God appear, when viewed in harmony with his love and goodness. Universalism is the only doctrine that can harmonize with these and all other divine attributes.

2. Universalism is the only doctrine that harmonizes with the declared objects of the mission of Christ. What was the object of Christ's mission?—for what purpose did he come into the world?—for what object did he labor, preach, work miracles, suffer, bleed, die, rise, and ascend? Was it that he might save a *few* souls from the general wreck of human nature? Was it that he might save a *part* of the world, and by his labors and miracles enhance the misery of the other part to all eternity? The word of God nowhere declares him to be the Saviour of a *part* of the world; nor does it declare him to be a *part of a Saviour* to the world; but it unequivocally declares that "God sent him to be *the Saviour of the world*." And they that were with and saw him, declare, "we know that this is indeed the Christ, *the Saviour of the world*." Now, Sir, let me ask, can Christ be the Saviour of the world, if

the world is never saved? Christ says, "Lo I come (it is written of me in the volume of the book) to do thy will, O God." God "will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth." "I came down from heaven," says Jesus, "not to do mine own will, but to do the will of him that sent me: and this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all he hath given me, (and the Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand,) I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day."

The Heathen are given to Christ for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession: and he says, "all that the Father giveth me shall come to me, and him that cometh to me I will in nowise cast out." Again, he says, he came to "seek and save that which was lost." How many were lost? Answer: all—all had sinned and come short of the glory of God—all had gone out of the way—there was none that did good, no not one. Will he succeed in saving that which was lost? Will he accomplish the work which he came to do? "I have finished the work (he says) which thou gavest me to do." "As by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation, even so by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life." For by the grace of God, Jesus tasted death for every man, and gave himself a ransom for all to be testified in due time. And we are expressly assured, that "he shall see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied," and "the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand." "God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved." Now, what is the obvious import of all these and numerous other similar passages? Can they be explained in consistency with the doctrine of a limited salvation? Will any thing short of the salvation of all men answer the end designed by the advent of Christ? Was not the design and provision as extensive as the human family—as ample as the wants of a perishing world? And will the end be defeated, or the purpose given up, or he, to whom all power in heaven and earth was given, be foiled by a subtle and mightier foe?

Suppose, Sir, a neighboring farmer, has a flock of sheep, consisting of one hundred, which have all gone astray and

got lost in the wilderness—he calls his servant and says, “My servant, I have chosen thee as the most faithful of all my household, my soul delighteth in thee, in thee I repose confidence, I will uphold thee, and my spirit shall go with thee,—my flock has wandered from me, they are all lost; go, search till you find them, and when you have found them, bring them back with joy to my fold; for it is not my will that any of them should perish, but that all should be brought back to one fold, with one faithful shepherd at their head.” The servant starts on his mission, he finds the sheep in the wilderness, all wild and undomesticated, some lost in deep ravines, and others wandering on the bleak mountains—he collects twenty-five out of the hundred, together, and returns to his master, saying, “I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do, I have found and saved your lost flock, and of all concerning which you gave me charge, I have lost none—behold here I am, with the sheep of your pasture.” The master looks, and instead of seeing *the flock of an hundred sheep*, sees only *one-fourth part* of the flock! Think you, dear Sir, that he would be satisfied with the labors of his servant, or acknowledge his statement true, that he had lost *none*? Would he not rather upbraid him with unfaithfulness and falsehood, and say, “I charged you to bring back *my flock*, the *hundred sheep*, and here you have only brought a *fourth part* of the flock, and now falsely insinuate that this is *the flock*, while the *majority* of the flock are still in the wilderness, perishing with hunger, and exposed to the devouring wolves and voracious tigers!” What could the servant reply? Would he say, “I supposed when you said *an hundred*, you only meant twenty-five, and when you said *all*, you only meant a *small part*!” Or would he say, “it was not my fault, but that of the sheep, that they did not come—I called, but they would not follow me—I approached, but they fled from me.” And would not the master answer such excuses by saying, “Thou unfaithful, slothful and wicked servant, by thine own words thou art condemned; for instead of using thine efforts to save them that were alienated and lost, thou hast only brought back those that were the least liable to destruction—those that voluntarily came back, without one effort of thine—but those which most needed thy labors, thou hast left to perish—



those that were the most alienated, and knew not thy voice, were those on which thy principal labors should have been bestowed—they are of too much value to be lost—thy faithfulness and perseverance might have overcome their timidity, given them confidence in thy friendly intentions, and induced them at last to follow thee home in peace—thou hast abused my trust, disappointed my expectations, and through thy neglect my sheep are mostly lost.”

The application of the above you will readily understand. And now, Sir, unless Universalism be true, one of two things must follow—either, 1, the object of Christ’s mission is falsely stated in the Bible; or, 2, that object will never be attained. For it is clear that Universalism is the only doctrine that harmonizes with the declared object of Christ’s mission.

But lest I exceed the limits I had prescribed myself in this letter, I shall defer what more I have to say on this subject till a future number.

Yours, &c.

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## LETTER XXIII.

*The same subject continued.*

DEAR SIR—I again resume the consideration of Universalism, and here beg leave to remark,

3. *That this doctrine alone accords with the best feelings and holiest affections and aspirations of the human heart.* There is not a man on earth possessed of the feelings of humanity, or that can justly boast of one particle of philanthropy, but what fervently desires the salvation of all men. The love of happiness is connatural with the existence of man; and every good mind seeks not only his own happiness, but the well-being of all his fellow-creatures. No benevolent mind can delight in the misery of its fellow-being, either for time or eternity, any more than it could delight in its own misery. And I

think, dear Sir, from the good opinion I have of you, that I hazard nothing in saying, your *prayers*, whatever may be your theory, are on the side of Universalism. You cannot but desire the reformation, and pray for the final holiness and happiness of all your fellow-beings. You cannot but pray that your own doctrine of eternal misery may prove false—you cannot pray for its truth—you cannot pray in accordance with your creed.

Let us here suppose a being, so lost to every benevolent feeling, as to pray according to the *faith* set forth in your Confession—how must he pray? Something like the following. “O Lord, my God, thou Father of the spirits of all flesh, I thank thee that thou hast created an eternal hell, and that thou hast, from all eternity, foreordained millions and millions of my fellow-beings, equally as good, or better, by their practice, than myself, to experience its hottest pains, world without end! I pray that they may feel thy keenest ire and hottest indignation forever. I pray that thine eternal and omnipotent wrath may be poured out, without mixture, upon them—that they may never know what happiness is, but its dreadful contrast—that beneath the liquid billows of hell’s molten sea their torments may be ever increasing and never ceasing—that instead of being reclaimed from sin, their iniquities may be eternally perpetuated, and their rebellion against thee never end—that instead of their ever being restored to holiness, and employed in singing hallelujahs to thy praise, they may be fixed in a state of unending impurity and transgression, and blaspheme thy holy name world without end—that”——\*\*\*\* but I stop—I can proceed no farther with such a prayer—it is too horrid—it approaches almost to blasphemy. It is such a prayer as no *man* can offer to the infinite Majesty of heaven. No *being in the universe* can pray thus, unless it be a malignant and infernal spirit, if such spirits there be. But, Sir, if the doctrine of endless misery be true, why *not* pray thus? Why not pray that such dreadful decrees may be carried into effect? Is it more wicked for you to pray for the accomplishment of such decrees, than it is for God to ordain them? Ah! Sir, there is too much benevolence in your heart—there is too much even of holiness there, to allow you thus to pray. You cannot be as bad, *if you try*, as your doctrine makes out your God to be.

But, Sir, whence springs this abhorrence of misery—whence this love of happiness, this desire to extend it to all? Springs it from an evil fountain, or a good? Comes it to render keener our misery, or to be the precursor of our enjoyment? We see provision made in the natural world for satisfying all the natural desires of all the inferior animals, and of man. We see the beast, the bird, the fish, and even the worm, provided with all necessary means of satisfying their desires, and of being happy, according to their several capacities for enjoyment. We see man provided with every thing necessary to satisfy his natural desires (leaving out, of course, his artificial and adscititious desires) in temporal things. But man has *spiritual* desires—desires that look beyond this world. All men desire immortal and endless happiness in the future state of existence. Whence arises this desire? It is implanted by the hand of nature, or nature's God. And is here an exception to the general order of nature? Has God made provision for satisfying all the *natural* desires of his creatures, and none, or but inadequate provision for supplying the *spiritual* wants of his children? Is this the only desire that is to remain forever unsatisfied?

But to say nothing of this universal desire of happiness in all men in relation to themselves, I wish to urge upon your notice the prayers of all good men, in all ages of the world. It is the first prayer from the opening lips of the new born child of grace—and the last supplication breathed forth from the dying saint—that God would have mercy upon sinners, reclaim them from their wanderings, and make them participants of his salvation—that the Saviour may go on, conquering and to conquer, till the last rebel submits to his mild sceptre—till all shall know him from the least to the greatest—till every knee shall humbly bow, and every tongue confess him Lord to the glory of God the Father—till sin shall be finished, an end made of transgression, everlasting righteousness be brought in, and universal holiness and happiness prevail. Such are the desires and prayers of all Christians and saints in all ages—and they all rejoice at the conversion of every sinner from the error of his ways, to the knowledge and obedience of the truth. Yea; the very angels in heaven rejoice at such an event; for “there is joy in heaven over one sinner that



repenteth." I ask, then, will the joy of heaven ever be full and complete, while one sinner remains excluded from God's mercy, when his conversion would give an *accession* of joy to the abodes of the blessed? And, I ask again, from whence spring these philanthropic desires, and who inspires the hearts of Christians to pray for the universal prevalence of holiness and happiness? Do they not spring from God—does not he inspire such prayers? The answer must be, *yes*. Well, can the stream rise higher than the fountain?—can the receiver be greater than the giver?—can the drop be greater than the ocean?—or the spark greater than the flame? Will God inspire his creatures with more benevolence than he possesses himself? Or with prayers in opposition to his own will? Or will he impart to them desires which he determines never to fulfil? Impossible. God will answer the prayers of the righteous—he will fulfil their desires. We are expressly commanded to pray for all men; and the reason assigned is, God wills the salvation of all. We are also commanded to pray in faith, nothing wavering, to lift up holy hands without wrath and doubting.

Thus, Sir, you see that the doctrine of universal salvation, and that alone, accords with the best affections and holiest aspirations of the human heart, and particularly with the prayers of all true Christians; while no one can pray for an opposite doctrine to be true.

4. *The doctrine of universal salvation is the most favorable to true and genuine devotion, and the most salutary in its moral and practical influence upon the heart and life.* No doctrine that was ever yet preached in the world, can possibly lay its believers and advocates under so strong and solemn obligations of love, gratitude and obedience to God, as this; or enjoin so forcibly the duties of benevolence and charity among men; and surely none can render the contemplation and service of God so cheering and dear to the feeling heart. The doctrine is the doctrine of love, and our services are the services of love; not the cold, morose and formal piety of the bigot, the furious ebullitions of the fanatic, the heartless fawning of the sycophant, nor the cringing servility of the slave; but the free, cheerful and voluntary aspirations of gratitude and affection. We view God as the universal Father, Friend, and

Saviour of his children—whose wisdom comprehends all things, and whose designs can never be defeated ; whose power, though omnipotent, is not the terror, but the safety and defence of his children ; and whose benevolence bestows, and ever will bestow, more good upon us than the utmost stretch of our desires could possibly seek or ask at his hand. We feel to adore him for all his adorable perfections, to love him for his great love wherewith he hath loved us, to obey him because his commands are not grievous, but easy, and in keeping them there is peace and great reward. We look upon all mankind as brethren, created and blessed by the same almighty Benefactor and Father, and feel bound to do good to all as we have opportunity. If we love God we shall love our brother also. And as God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. If we see our fellow-men going astray, we are assured that “the goodness of God leadeth to repentance,” and we urge them back to duty and virtue by every tender and affecting consideration—by every tie of gratitude and love that can touch the heart, or recal them to virtue and duty. And we believe such motives far more powerful and effectual in reclaiming sinners than all the terrors of a burning hell, and all the wrath of an offended Deity. For we know that the love of Christ constraineth to obedience. When drawn by the cords of love and the bands of a man, they will run after him.

I know, indeed, that there are some who call themselves Universalists, who come very far short of living up to the requirements of this glorious doctrine, who at heart are strangers to its principles, and have nothing of it but the name. This, however, is the case, more or less, with all denominations ; and therefore cannot be urged as an objection against the doctrine of Universalism : for none (who know what Universalism is) can deny that, if Universalists live up to their principles, and obey the requirements of their doctrine, they must be good men. We doubtless all come far short of duty—but, for one, I neither desire myself, nor have any wish that others should be any better than Universalism requires and strictly enjoins—i. e. to love God with all the heart and mind, and all mankind as ourselves. I will now close what I have to say under this head, in the beautiful language of Dr. T. Southwood Smith, of England :—

"The cheering and benevolent tendency of a belief in the ultimate happiness of all intelligent beings ought, at least, to entitle it to attention. He who believes that the whole system of things is under the wisest and best direction, has a source of consolation which must be entirely unknown to him, whose system leads him to suspect that the wisdom and benevolence of its author are limited and partial. Embracing the faith of the first, when true to my principles, I can contemplate the present with complacency, and anticipate the future with delight. I can look upon adversity with resignation, upon prosperity with a calm and chastened joy. I can smile even in those moments when neither philosophy nor religion can check the starting tear. I see, it is true, that man is born to trouble, that his days are few and evil, that impurity stains him, that passions blind him, that evil of every kind assails him, and that the iniquities of many individuals will incur a long and protracted period of suffering ; but I see too, a principle at work which must finally destroy it. I see the hand of the Deity arranging every event with exquisite skill and unbounded benignity. I see the prospects brighten as the wheels of time revolve, developing gradually the stupendous scheme, and manifesting at every movement new indications of wisdom, and new demonstrations of love. I see at the helm of affairs, an intelligence that cannot err, a watchfulness that cannot tire, a benignity which cannot be unkind, and a power which cannot be frustrated. I see at the head of his large family, a Father, whose equal love is extended to every individual, who is laboring to promote the happiness of each alike, according to the measure of capacity he has given, and who will not labor in vain. Though clouds and darkness are around about him, I am satisfied that righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne. I therefore bow with resignation, where I cannot exult with joy, and glow with hope, even when nearest to despair."

5. *Universalism needs only to be known and understood to be embraced and loved by every enlightened, benevolent, and ingenuous mind.* It is a fact, which I look upon as of no little importance in its favor, that till within a very few years, almost all the believers and advocates of Universalism in this country, were once believers in the popular



doctrine of endless misery; and who in despite of early prejudice, the influence of tradition, the entreaties of friends, and sometimes great pecuniary sacrifices and the loss of their standing in churches and society—and many times with no other information on the subject than what they obtained by a prayerful perusal of the Bible, felt themselves constrained to come out and avow their belief in the doctrine of the final restitution. Many of them had been among the brightest ornaments of Orthodox churches, and nothing but a sense of imperious duty, and a conscientious regard for the honor of God and the happiness of man, could have induced them to make the sacrifices that were required of them for avowing their belief in Universalism. It is true, that at *this* day, there are many who are brought up in Universalist families, and early taught this sublime and glorious doctrine from the lips of the parents. But still, multitudes who were trained up in the belief of all the dogmas of your creed, are continually coming over to the side of universal benevolence, and avowing their belief in the truth of this sentiment. This argues much in its favor, especially when viewed in connexion with another fact, viz. that no pains are spared by your preachers and members generally, to make the doctrine appear odious, abhorrent and dangerous, to imbue the minds of all youth with the bitterest prejudice against it, and, if possible, to prevent all from hearing it preached by its own advocates: while on the other hand, Universalists are perfectly willing that all their adherents and youth should hear Presbyterians preach, even when they preach against Universalism—we tell them to hear all sides, and then judge which is right—to “prove all things, and hold fast that which is good”—we have no fears as to the result. For we are sure that an ingenuous and candid mind, when thoroughly acquainted with both systems, cannot be long in determining which doctrine is the most beautiful, reasonable, scriptural, and the most honorable to God and salutary for man. Most of the members of your communion are astonishingly ignorant of the doctrine that we hold and preach, and there seems to be a great desire among your preachers that they should remain ignorant of it. But why this desire to keep them ignorant? Can information on the subject injure them? If the doctrine be false and

absurd, they will find it out by hearing it, and thereby be enabled to expose and refute its errors and absurdities. But ignorance is but a poor excuse for their being incompetent to do it. The truth is, however,—and your preachers are aware of it—that the more Universalism is known the more it is believed; the better and more generally it is understood, the more advocates it will gain. And the time is rapidly approaching when, notwithstanding every exertion to the contrary, it *will* be known and *generally* believed.

6. *Universalism counts among its advocates many of the most amiable and learned men, in almost all ages of the Christian church, that have ever adorned her ranks or done honor to human nature.* I notice this particular, not by way of boasting, nor as an argument calculated to prove the doctrine true, but because it is often said by uninformed individuals, who probably know no better, that Universalism is a *new* doctrine, that has never been heard of till very recently, and has never been advocated by any except a few obscure and graceless individuals without any just pretensions to learning or piety; and because I think that yourself, as well as most of my readers, may be interested in reading what I have to say on this head.

Among the many eminent men, in ancient and modern times, who have advocated the doctrine of the final restitution of all things, I have room to mention comparatively but few. The following must suffice for my present purpose :—

Clemens Alexandrinus, the celebrated and learned Origen, Gregory Thaumaturgus, Pamphilius, Eusebius, Titus, Bishop of Bostra, Basil the Great of Cappadocia, Gregory Nazianzen, Didymus of Alexandria, Jerome, Evagrius Ponticus, John of Jerusalem, Domitian, Theodorus, Nonnus, Leontius, and many others of the early Christian Fathers and Bishops, before the general prevalence of Popery. And subsequently to the Reformation, Dr. Thomas Burnet, Rev. J. Brandon, Paul J. Bitaupe, Henry Brooke, Dr. Thomas Broughton, Rev. John Brown, Dr. David Hartley, Dr. Thomas Belsham, Dr. George Cheyne, Dr. Samuel Clarke, Dr. Thomas Cogan, Dr. Lant Carpenter, John Le Clerc, Dr. Samuel Huber, De La Cheverette, Dumoulin, L'Archer, Durant, Eberhard, Chevalier Ramsay, William Law, William Duncomb, Archbishop Tillotson, Sir George

Stonehouse, Bishop Newton, John Henderson, Dr. Joseph Priestley, Dr. Henry More, Dr. Redman, Soame Jenyns, the German Steinbart, Damm, Fuller, Fisher, Dr. De Benneville, Petersen, Pettitpierre, William Whiston, Rev. Robert Robinson, Rev. Rochemont Barbauld, Mrs. Ann Letitia Barbauld, Dr. John Jebb, Nathaniel Scarlett, Mr. Creighton, Mr. Cue, Lord President Duncan Forbes, Bishop George Rust, Archdeacon Paley, Dr. T. Southwood Smith, Editors of Analytical Review, Monthly and Critical Reviews, Dr. Jonathan Mayhew, Elhanan Winchester, Dr. Charles Chauncey, Dr. Benjamin Rush, and hundreds of other distinguished, amiable, eminent philosophers, divines and literati in England, and other countries of Europe and America.

The sanction which these names give to the doctrine, though I do not conceive they establish its truth, will yet tend to diminish the reproach which some ignorant opponents have attempted to heap on it, and, when it shall be generally known that they were its advocates, may serve to check that contemptuous manner in which some are accustomed to speak, both of the doctrine and all its advocates. It will at least show, 1st, that the doctrine is not new in this age, and 2d, that eminent learning, talents and piety have abetted its claims to divine authority.

I have now finished what I designed to say to you on the doctrine of universal salvation, except some incidental remarks which I shall reserve till my concluding letter. What I have written, I have written with candor and sincerity, and hope it will receive a candid perusal at your hands. One more letter I design shall close the series.

Yours, very respectfully.



## LETTER XXIV.

### *Concluding Epistle.*

DEAR SIR—In bringing this long series of letters to a close, I cannot take my leave of you, without once more calling your attention to a candid and serious review of your whole system of theory and practice, together with their obvious tendency—I mean, so far as the peculiarities of Presbyterianism are concerned—to see whether you have not, from some cause or other, either from the power of tradition, or prejudice, or early associations, or the sanction of great names, or self-interest and the love of popularity, too hastily adopted your opinions, and subscribed to principles and doctrines without any foundation in reason or revelation, taking for granted those very premises that required the most substantial proof. Is it not, Sir, more than probable that, from some one or more of the above causes, you were led to subscribe to the fundamental doctrines of your creed, before you had ever thoroughly examined the subject for yourself, or allowed yourself time to reflect that there was at least a possibility of their being untrue, and even pernicious?

Can it be possible, Sir, that a man of your natural good sense and strong powers of mind, saw, or thought you saw, sufficient evidence in the word of God to convince you of the popular doctrine of the fall—that by eating an apple Adam lost forever the image and favor of his Maker, became totally changed and “corrupted in all the faculties and parts of soul and body,” was transformed from an immortal to a mortal being, and conveyed the taint of natural and moral death, through all his unborn posterity for six thousand years past, and as many thousand years to come, if the world shall continue so long? Can it be that you found evidence to convince you of the doctrine of total depravity—that all the posterity of Adam, in consequence of the original corruption of their nature, through his act, without their agency, consent or knowledge, became “utterly indisposed, disabled, and made *opposite to all good and wholly inclined to all evil, and that continually*”—that

every act and volition of man, in a state of nature, is sinful in the sight of God, however well intended by the creature—that all that men call social and benevolent affections and virtuous feelings and actions, are infinitely criminal in the eye of Heaven, and justly deserving of “all the miseries of this life, death itself, and the pains of hell forever”? Did you learn from the Bible the doctrine of election and reprobation—that God did, from all eternity, elect some men and angels to everlasting life, and predestinate others to everlasting death, without any foresight of faith or good works on the part of the elect,

“Predestinating some, without pretence

‘To heaven; and some to hell for no offence;’

that their number was so certain and definite that it could not be either increased or diminished—that God called on all men, not excepting the reprobate, as free agents, to yield obedience to his holy law, though he well knew they were “*utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all good,*” &c., and that he himself had from all eternity “*unchangeably foreordained whatsoever comes to pass,*” not only with regard to all their actions in time, but their endless destiny in eternity? Was it from the Bible you learned the tremendous doctrine of endless misery—that God will torment a large portion of his own offspring in hell to all eternity, with no possibility of doing himself, those miserable sufferers, or any other being in the universe, the least imaginable good, but merely to glut his vindictive wrath, and satiate his merciless cruelty, notwithstanding he expressly declares he “he will not cast off forever”—that he “will not contend forever, nor be always wroth, lest the spirit should fail before him, and the souls he has made”? Was it from an attentive perusal of the holy Scriptures that you were led to believe in the existence of an almost omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, *personal devil*, who was once a pure and holy angel in heaven, but now a fallen demon confined in the prison of hell, yet still at large, roaming through Europe, Asia, Africa, America, and the trackless regions of the ocean, tempting men, women and children, to sin, in *propria persona*, and who shall at last succeed in peopling hell with more subjects from among the offspring of God, than the Messiah shall be able to save and get to heaven? Was it from the declarations of

Scripture, or from tradition and human authority, that you were led to embrace the mysterious and inexplicable doctrine of the trinity—of *three distinct persons in one God*, each of which is supreme God, and *all* of which make no more than *one* Supreme—that *one* of these persons is the *Father* of another, and yet *both* are of the *same age*—that while the *three* are essentially and really *one*, the Father is not the Son, nor is the Son the Father, and neither of these is the Holy Ghost, nor is the Holy Ghost either the Father or the Son—a doctrine that was unheard of during the three first centuries of the Christian era? Was it, Sir, from the Gospel of Jesus Christ that you first obtained your ideas of the doctrine of vicarious atonement—that in consequence of the fall of man, which “God from all eternity,” had “unchangeably foreordained,” and the attendant corruption and entire prostitution of human nature in sin and iniquity, whereby all men were justly obnoxious to endless and infinite misery, the Deity was so enraged at his offending creatures, that nothing short of their universal and endless damnation could satisfy him, or what was deemed an equivalent thereto, and equally as acceptable and well-pleasing in his sight, the infinite sufferings of his innocent Son, in their room and stead, while the guilty were allowed to escape with impunity—yea, that the Deity *himself* willingly suffered this infinite torment to appease his own anger and reconcile himself to man, paid the infinite debt, to cancel his own claims; and yet, after all, the debt of millions of them will *never* be paid, nor his justice satiated with their misery? And was it from the “law and testimony” of truth, that you imbibed the notion that the officers of your church had committed to them “the keys of the kingdom of heaven,” whereby they are made keepers of men’s consciences, and umpires to decide their eternal destinies, by opening that kingdom to, or shutting it against men, according as they should conform, or not conform, to all the dogmas and practices of the Presbyterian church?

No, Sir, by whatever specious appearances you may have been led into your present belief, such doctrines as these find no support in the word of God—they are not sanctioned by the Gospel of our salvation—are not taught either in the Old or New Testament—they are the traditions of



men, doctrines of human invention, unknown in the days of primitive Christianity, and must finally go down to "the tomb of the Capulets"—their primeval nonentity. And I am sensible, if you will unbend your mind, and allow yourself candidly and prayerfully to review your whole system, together with all the circumstances under which it was embraced, you will be convinced of the truth of what I here affirm, and perceive that you adopted your system, either from the power of tradition, early association or prejudice, the authority of great names, the love of popularity or self-interest, or some similar cause; and equally sensible am I, that a similar examination would have the same effect on thousands of communicants in the Presbyterian church. And though I cannot entertain very sanguine, I still indulge some *faint* hopes, that you will give yourself the trouble and labor of making this re-examination, or that if you do not, some others may, into whose hands these letters may chance to fall. Indeed, the examination has already commenced with not a few whose opinions have formerly coincided with yours; and the result is, what might naturally be expected, an abandonment of the system. And this work of investigation must and will go on, whether you approve or disapprove. The human mind is beginning to be awakened from its slumber, and to shake itself from the dust of tradition.

Many of the eagle-eyed leaders of your sect have discovered this, to them startling fact, and have redoubled their diligence to trammel the minds of all over whom they have any influence, before they shall be able to judge for themselves what is right and what is wrong. Hence, the extraordinary efforts that are now being made to indoc-trinate the tender minds of children with the peculiar dog-mas of your church, before they arrive to years of understanding. Hence, too, the extraordinary and simultaneous movements, throughout our country, by your clergy, in getting up and carrying on what you denominate *revivals*, the tendency of which is, to drive into your ranks, through the fear of hell, thousands who could not be drawn in by the power of truth and the love of God; to induce thousands to profess that do not possess religion, with a view evidently of preventing them from imbibing other doctrines, as they most surely would, if left to themselves.

Hence, in many instances, the abandonment or concealment of the most odious parts of your system, in the time of excitement, till the converts are secured by enlisting under the Presbyterian banner, when having once surrendered their reason and judgment to the direction of the clergy, they may afterwards be indoctrinated by degrees, and with less danger of resistance. Thousands have thus surrendered themselves to the guidance of the clergy, and become slaves for life, to doctrines, the reasonableness and scripturality of which they could never see; hundreds have been driven to life-lasting melancholy and despair, and led to believe themselves reprobates, because they could not see and understand the tremendous doctrines of your creed; and multitudes have been driven to insanity and suicide from the same cause, believing the doctrines true because they had heard no other, and being unable to bring the benevolence of their own hearts to acquiesce in such a soul-chilling theory.

These extraordinary excitements, falsely called *revivals of religion*, which evidently originated in the cause, and are employed for the purposes, above named, are a new thing with your denomination, wholly disapproved by all your fathers and many of your cotemporaries in the ministry, and denounced as disorganizing, fanatical and dangerous. And such indeed they evidently are; but they must have their day. It must, however, be a short one; for the evil will correct itself, when the returning good sense of the people shall put an everlasting quietus on such extravagance. Inquiry is abroad in the earth. Light has begun to dawn and it will continue to shine "more and more unto the perfect day."

But there is one evil resulting from these extravagancies in practice, viewed in connexion with the doctrines of your church, of too fatal and pernicious consequences to be viewed with indifference, or passed over in silence here. It is their obvious tendency to infidelity—the lamentable fact, that hundreds of naturally good minds have thereby been driven to bathe in the sluggish waters of Deism, or plunge into the dark gulf of Atheism. The benevolent mind cannot contemplate on the awful doctrines of your creed but with instinctive abhorrence; and with equal revulsion do its absurdities strike the understanding of the

enlightened. Look, Sir, at the leaders of infidelity, both of the old and new world—who are they? and what are they? and what has driven them where they now are? Taylor and Carlisle, the leaders of infidelity in England, were once staunch believers in what is called Orthodoxy, all the leading doctrines of your creed—Frances Wright, and both the Owens, and I believe Houston likewise, were all educated and trained up in the belief of the same—and they cherished and hugged those doctrines with a zeal and devotion that would have done honor to a better cause, until at last they became nauseated with such fulsome draughts, and disgusted by the near and constant contemplation of such monstrous absurdities, and with them renounced the Bible and the whole of Christianity, not discriminating between the wheat and the tares, or the doctrines and principles really belonging to Christianity, and those dogmas and inventions of men palmed off upon mankind in the abused name of Christianity. And multitudes in this country are now following in their footsteps, from the same cause, and plunging in the Lethean waters of infidelity. And so long as the leading doctrines of your creed are preached and sought to be enforced by the fanatical movements and operations of modern revivalists, so long will infidelity hold up its head in this country, and boldly bid defiance to successful opposition—so long will its every arrow be pointed with the keenest and even with successful satire, when dipped in the dogmas of your creed, and its every shaft will hit its mark, when, though *apparently* aimed at Christianity, it is *in reality* only aimed at what has been falsely *called* and mistaken for such, viz., the system of nominal *Orthodoxy*.

These, Sir, are the honest and sober convictions of my mind, plainly expressed. They may not be very welcome to you; but I could not withhold them consistently with a sense of duty. I am more and more convinced, every year of my life, that Calvinism does naturally lead to skepticism, and that in the revolting principles of that creed are hid and nourished, the seeds which have given rise to the greatest part of the infidelity which prevails in the Christian world. It is related of Lord Shaftsbury, that, on asking Bishop Burnet if the doctrine of eternal torment was actually taught in the Bible, and being answered in the



affirmative, he immediately replied, "I cannot embrace a system which inculcates a doctrine so utterly opposed to all just ideas of the character of the merciful Ruler of the universe." And what man in existence, possessing the common feelings of humanity, and the attributes of common sense, that would not commend the wisdom of the reply, and heartily respond amen to its sentiment, if unbiassed by prepossession? A benevolent and enlightened mind cannot receive the doctrine of endless misery and its concomitants, as the truth of Heaven revealed to man. Convince such that these doctrines are not taught in the Bible—that so far from countenancing such unworthy views of the character of God, and such heart-rending ideas of the destiny of man, it teaches the infinite wisdom, power, and goodness of God—that he is the universal Father, Friend and Saviour of his children, infinitely and unchangeably benevolent to all, and that he "hath spoken of the restitution of all things, by the mouth of all his holy prophets, since the world began;"—and he whose face was before averted with disgust and horror, will turn and listen; he who was about to reject the whole of Christianity as unworthy of his notice, will joyfully embrace it as infinitely worthy the character of God as its author, of Christ as its mediator, and of the acceptance, obedience, joy, and everlasting gratitude of man. And, Sir, it is my firm and unwavering belief that the doctrine of impartial grace and the final holiness and happiness of all mankind, is the only doctrine that can save this country from the desolating spread and blighting influence of infidelity—that this alone is adapted to this end, and *will succeed* ultimately in saving, not only this nation, but all the nations of the earth, both from infidelity on one hand, and debasing superstition on the other, and will at last bring all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues into the joyful embrace and obedience of the glorious Gospel of the ever-blessed God. This alone can reach the cases and confer happiness on thousands of our race, to whom no other doctrine could bring any benefit. This alone is adapted to all nations of men, and all climes and countries of the earth, and this alone *must* prevail, if ever the millenium takes place. It is, I believe, the *truth* of God, and will prevail—it is for the *honor* of God, and he will

give success to it—it is for the *benefit* and *salvation* of man, and he *will receive it*.

And now, dear Sir, if you look upon this doctrine with that abhorrence and dread with which you have hitherto professed to regard it; if you verily believe it to be false and deceptive, dangerous and pernicious, I earnestly and solemnly call on you to come before the public and prove it such—lay open the deep veins of its hidden iniquity—expose it to the scorn and contempt of a deceived public—show that it has no foundation in Scripture, reason, or the nature of things—redeem your character as the determined opponent of error and falsehood, and rescue community from the deceptive wiles of an artful and insidious foe. Or if, as a minister of the Gospel, you cannot perceive it to be your duty to come out and attack error openly, face to face, and you still adhere to the doctrines of your creed, believing your system to be the truth of God, you will certainly find labor enough here to employ your talents and exert all your powers in defending it. Your fort is besieged, your ramparts are thrown down, your very citadel is entered, and the arms and ammunition there laid up in store, are employed in razing to the ground the very last vestige of your boasted city. Come forth, then, as the bold soldier of Jesus Christ, gird on your whole armor, and fight manfully for the truth—let not the army of the aliens prevail—if you have any regard for the truth, any love of immortal souls, any desire to sustain the honor of your cause, any wish to regain and revive the faded laurels of John Calvin—in short, if you have any ambition to redeem the departing glories of Presbyterianism, I beseech you to prove yourself worthy of the place you fill, and the talents I have supposed you to possess. I have not, heretofore, called on you to come out and defend your system from the assaults that have been made upon it in the course of this series of letters; nor have I supposed it would be of any use to do it till I had concluded what I had to say; but having now completed the series, I think I have a right to make that call; and I hope it will not be in vain. I think you owe it to me, to your congregation, to the public, and above all, to your cause and your God, if you believe Presbyterianism to be the doctrine of the Bible, to come forth with your strong reasons to sustain it.

If you neglect this solemn and imperious duty, what will the public think and say of such neglect? Can it not be as justly said of you, as it was of some of the ancient watchmen of Israel, by the prophet Isaiah, "*They are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark; sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber*"? And how will you answer, for such neglect, to your conscience and your God? If you see me and multitudes of others embracing what you believe to be fatal and destructive errors, errors too that you believe will land us in eternal wo, and you put not forth your hand, nor lift a finger to save—if you believe your system to be the truth that sanctifies and saves the souls of those that embrace it, and you neglect to come forth and defend it when it is assaulted, and in consequence of this neglect, multitudes never see nor understand that truth, and multitudes more are led to renounce and give it up forever, to their eternal loss, how, I ask, will you answer to your conscience and your God, for such neglect? or how appear before the tribunal of your final Judge? I hope, dear Sir, you will never incur the guilt of such neglect.

You have nothing to fear, Sir, by coming up manfully to the work of investigation—at least nothing that a good and honest man need fear. For truth can never suffer by investigation—it always appears to still greater advantage—and the more severe the fiery ordeal it endures, the brighter will the gold appear when it comes forth. And should you succeed in establishing your own doctrine, and removing all objections; in overthrowing mine, and convincing me of my error, you certainly will not deem the labor spent in vain; for in that case I promise you I would at once renounce my doctrine and embrace yours, and as zealously defend, as I now oppose it. And if, on the other hand, you should fail, be overcome in the struggle, and your system whelmed in ruin, your defeat would be a victory, and the downfall of your system, your triumph—and for this plain reason: you are constantly praying that your doctrine may be false and mine true, and by such downfall of the former, you would have the joyful satisfaction of believing your prayers were answered, and, with me, you would triumph in the hope of a world's salvation.

I have now done. I have used great plainness of speech, perhaps too great; if so, I trust you will pardon the error.



If in aught I have said, I have injured your feelings, I sincerely regret it. I did not intend it. I abhor the distinguishing doctrines of your creed, esteem them false and pernicious, and while I remain of my present opinion, shall do all that I can in an honest and honorable way to oppose them ; but for your person, your character, and your happiness, I entertain the highest and sincerest regard. As a man and a citizen, I highly respect you ; as a Christian and philanthropist, I love you. I shall ever pray for your prosperity and happiness, and would cheerfully do aught in my power to increase them ; and equally happy shall I ever be to reciprocate with you the kind offices of friendship, and the tokens of brotherly love. A difference of faith, though my feelings in regard to *systems* are what I have expressed, yet alters not my affections or feelings for the *man*.

With my best wishes for your long life, and an increase of happiness and usefulness every succeeding year thereof, I subscribe myself, Rev. and dear Sir, very respectfully and sincerely your friend and brother in the Gospel of our common Lord.

DOLPHUS SKINNER.

A BIBLE CREED,

AND

LETTERS TO

REV. D. C. LANSING, D. D.

*Pastor of the Second Presbyterian Church in Utica.*

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## A B I B L E C R E E D .

ARTICLE 1. *Concerning God and Christ.* We believe that the Lord our God is ONE LORD—that we *all* have ONE FATHER ; ONE GOD hath created us—and hath made of one blood *all nations of men*, to dwell on all the face of the earth—that though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many and lords many,) yet to us there is but ONE GOD, THE FATHER, of whom are all things, and we in him ; and *one Lord Jesus Christ*, by whom are all things and we by him, (for God hath *made* him both Lord and Christ,) for there is *one God* and *one mediator between* God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time. Deut. vi : 4 ; Mark xii : 29 ; Mal. ii : 10 ; Acts ii : 36, and xvii : 26 ; 1 Cor. viii : 5, 6 ; 1 Tim. ii : 5, 6.

ART. 2. *Concerning the character of God.* We believe the Lord our God is the Almighty, and of great power—that his understanding (or wisdom) is infinite—that he is love itself—good unto all, and his tender mercies over all his works—that he loveth all the things that are, and abhorreth nothing that his hands have made, for he never would have created any thing to have hated it—that he is a *just* God and a *Saviour*—who *will have all men* to be *saved* and come to the knowledge of the truth, and who *worketh all things* after the counsel of his *own will*—that in him *mercy* and *truth* are met together, *righteousness* and *peace* have embraced each other. Gen. xvii : 1 ; Ps. cxlvii : 5, and lxxxv : 10, and xlv : 9 ; Wisdom xi : 24 ; Isa. xlv : 21 ; 1 Tim. ii : 4 ; Eph. i : 11 ; 1 John iv : 8, 16.

ART. 3. *Concerning the mission and mediation of Christ.* We believe God sent his Son to be the *Saviour of the world*—that to this end, (as he loved both his Son and the world,) he gave *all things* into his hand, even power over *all flesh*, that he might give eternal life to as many as the Father hath given him, and that all that the Father gave

him shall so come to him as not to be cast out—that as he tasted death for every man, and is a propitiation for the sins of the whole world, he shall see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied—that as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive—that having brought life and immortality to light by the Gospel, he shall continue to reign until death, the last enemy, is destroyed, and all things are subdued unto him; till every knee shall bow and every tongue confess him Lord to the glory of God the Father—and that then he will deliver up the reconciled kingdom to the Father, that God may be all in all. 1 John ii: 2, and iv: 14; John iii: 35, vi: 37, xvii: 2; Heb. ii: 9; Isa. liii: 11; 1 Cor. xv: 22, 24–28; 2 Tim. i: 10; Phil. ii: 10, 11.

ART. 4. *Concerning the motive to obedience, &c.* We believe it is our duty to love God because he first loved us—that if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another—that the goodness of God leadeth to repentance—that the grace of God that bringeth salvation to all men hath appeared, teaching us, that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world—and that those who believe in God ought to be careful to maintain good works; for these things are good and *profitable unto MEN*. 1 John iv: 11, 19; Rom. ii: 4; Titus ii: 11, 12, and iii: 8.

ART. 5. *Concerning the reward of obedience.* We believe that great peace have they who love God's law, and nothing shall offend them—they are like trees planted by the rivers of water, that bring forth their fruit in season; their leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever they do shall prosper—that wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness and all her paths are peace—that she is a tree of life to them that lay hold of her, and happy is every one that retaineth her—that Christ's yoke is easy and his burthen is light, and all who come to him find rest to their souls—that we which have believed do enter into rest—that, though God is the Saviour of all men, he is especially so of the believer—and that whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, and is not a forgetful hearer, but a *doer* of the work, *this man shall be blessed in his deed*. Ps. i: 3, and cxix: 165; Prov. iii: 17, 18; Matt. xi: 28–30; Heb. iii: 3; 1 Tim. iv: 10; James i: 25.

ART. 6. *Concerning punishment for disobedience.* We believe the way of the transgressor is hard—that the wicked are like the troubled sea when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt, for there is no peace, saith our God to the wicked—that he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done; and there is no respect of persons—that God will render to *every man* according to his deeds—tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile. Prov. xiii: 15; Isa. lvii: 20, 21; Matt. xvi: 27; Rom. ii: 6, 9; Col. iii: 25.

ART. 7. *Concerning the limitation and remedial design of punishment.* We believe the Lord will not cast off forever; but though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion according to the multitude of his mercies—that he will not contend forever, nor be always wroth, lest the spirit should fail before him, and the souls he has made—that although he may apparently forsake his children for a small moment, yet with great mercies will he gather them—in a little wrath he may hide his face from them for a small moment, but with everlasting kindness will he have mercy on them, and heal them, and lead them also, and restore comforts unto them—that whom he loveth he chasteneth, (and he loveth and chasteneth all,) for their profit, that they may be partakers of his holiness, and be enabled afterwards to say, “before I was afflicted I went astray, but now have I kept thy word.” Lam. iii: 31, 32; Isa. liv: 7, 8, and lvii: 16–18; Heb. xii: 7–11; Psalm lxxxix: 30–35, and cxix: 67.

ART. 8. *Concerning the Scriptures, the doctrines they teach, and the duties they enjoin.* We believe that all Scripture given by inspiration of God, is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction and instruction in righteousness—that the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit—that God hath spoken of the restitution of all things by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began—that the word, gone out of his mouth in righteousness, shall not return void, but shall accomplish that which he pleases, insomuch that every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall swear, saying, In the Lord have I righteousness and strength. From the Scrip-



tures, (which we take as the rule and guide of our faith and practice,) we are taught that the whole duty of man, is, to fear God and keep his commandments; to deal justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with God; to do good to all men as we have opportunity; and that pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father, is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and keep ourselves uncorrupted from the world. 2 Tim. iii: 16; 2 Peter i: 21; Acts iii: 21; Isa. xlv: 23, 24, and lv: 11; Mic. vi: 8; Eccl. xii: 13; Gal. vi: 10; James i: 27.

[The above creed, it is believed—inasmuch as it is drawn exclusively from the Bible—will be entirely unexceptionable with all sincere believers in, and disciples of, our Lord Jesus Christ. It may therefore be safely adopted by all; and by most, will doubtless be considered amply sufficient to answer all the ordinary purposes of a creed. We have, however, for certain reasons, thought proper to annex—which may be adopted or rejected, just as those who read it choose—the following]

### *Addenda.*

ITEM 1. We believe a certain class of people existed about eighteen hundred years ago, who were called *Pharisees*.

ITEM 2. We believe these ancient Pharisees esteemed themselves righteous, and despised others—that they thanked God they were not like other men—and said to others, “stand by thyself, come not near to me, for I am holier than thou.”

ITEM 3. We believe they loved the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, and greetings in the markets, and to be called of men Rabbi, Rabbi—made long prayers to be seen of men—fasted often—wore a sad countenance—paid tithes of the much they possessed—and gave alms merely to be seen of men, being always careful to sound a trumpet before them when they gave.

ITEM 4. We believe these people were extremely punctilious in the observance of small matters, outward forms and ceremonies, new moons and *Sabbath days*, paying tithe of mint, and anise, and cummin, but neglecting the

weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy and faith—and that they bitterly persecuted the benevolent Jesus, and accused *him* of being a wicked *Sabbath breaker*,\* and a *friend* of publicans and sinners.

ITEM 5. We believe these ancient Pharisees were great advocates for *missions*, insomuch that they even compassed sea and land to make *one* proselyte, and when he was made they made him (if possible) two-fold more the child of hell than themselves—that for the purpose of carrying on these missions, they devoured *widow's houses*, for a *pretence* making long prayers, and laid heavy burthens, and grievous to be borne, on *men's* shoulders, which they would not move with one of their fingers.

ITEM 6. We believe this ancient sect formed a *religious party in politics*, and under the pretence of reforming the nation from their degeneracy, made a great outcry against Sabbath breaking and drunkenness (as in their accusations against Jesus) and thus made themselves, outwardly, like whited sepulchres, but within were full of extortion and excess, dead men's bones and all uncleanness.

ITEM 7. We believe these people were in the habit of straining at gnats and swallowing camels without number—and that they were a set of blind guides and arrant hypocrites! for which belief we have the high authority of the greatest Reformer and the most faithful preacher who was ever in the world.

ITEM 8. And lastly : We believe there are a *similar* set of people in the world at the *present day*.

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\* Doctor Lansing was exceedingly bitter, about this time, against Col. Johnson's Report on Sunday Mails, and all who concurred in the principles maintained in that Report.

## LETTER I.

*On the subject of the Doctor's Lectures against Universalism—Misrepresentation—a call for a candid hearing and fair treatment.*

DEAR SIR—I make no apology for addressing you in this public manner; nor do I deem that either yourself, or the public, or propriety will demand one.

You have lately commenced delivering a course of lectures, on Sunday evenings, in your church, against the rapidly prevailing heresy of Universalism, or rather what you are pleased to *call* Universalism; though as far as I can learn, you have not yet stated the doctrine held by this denomination, nor any thing that resembles it. I had the pleasure, or rather the patience, to hear your *second introduction* to the subject of your discussion. Since then my engagements have been such, that I have not been favored with the opportunity of hearing you, nor do I expect to have the privilege again before the course of lectures is completed, as I am engaged at a distance from home, every Sabbath, for a few weeks to come.\*

I am, however, informed by those who have heard, all you have yet said on the subject, (what I expected from the specimen I heard,) that your discourses are principally made up of misrepresentation and abuse—in repeating the same stale charges that have been hundreds of times refuted and shown to be false—in vehement declamation, accompanied with violent gesticulation, concerning the dreadfully dangerous and licentious tendency of Universalism, &c. &c. Now for all these things you are known to be very conspicuous: whether it proceeds from ignorance or malice, I shall not pretend to determine. But from the opportunities you have enjoyed, I should hardly think it could proceed from the former. What confirms me in this suspicion, is, that you studiously and carefully keep your own creed out of sight, and oppose what you

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\* In this expectation I was happily disappointed, (as the subsequent letters will show,) for I afterwards attended several of the Doctor's lectures on Universalism.



call Universalism, wholly on Arminian ground, which I cannot believe you would do if you were honest. You first caricature Universalism, making it something very different from what it is in reality—you then step out of your own ranks, and take the uniform and ammunition of your Arminian neighbor, and commence an assault and battery on an enemy of your own making. You set up a man of straw, making it as vulnerable as you please; then telling your people, *that is Universalism*, you draw your bow, and let fly your arrow.\* If this fails of bringing the monster down, you next apply the *tomahawk*; and if this fails, why a little *brimstone* may be used to assist in *firing* it; and we all know that *straw* is extremely *combustible*.

Lest, however, all this might possibly proceed from ignorance of the real sentiments of Universalists, I have concluded to favor you and the public, (as you will have seen above,) with a "BIBLE CREED," which contains, in substance, the sentiments of all *Universalists* with whom I am acquainted. Now, Sir, if you wish to combat *Universalism itself* (instead of its caricature) on fair and honorable ground, and finally and effectually *put it down forever*, all you have got to do, is, to refute the above *Bible creed*. And if this *be* your motive, I ask you (and your compliance or non-compliance with my request will determine this fact in my mind) to take this creed into your desk to-morrow evening,—read it through to your congregation, fully and fairly, without any ellipses—then placing one hand on your heart, and lifting the other with your eyes to heaven, solemnly declare, in the presence of God and your congregation, that you verily believe this creed is "false as the serpent, and mischievous as hell"—then go to work and refute it from beginning to end—show its opposition to the Scriptures and to enlightened reason—its licentious tendency and pernicious influence in society. Then come out openly and honorably in your *own* colors, and establish the doctrine of the Genevan reformer—the Calvinistic notion of particular election and reprobation, and endless unholiness and misery—without going on to

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\* This allusion to the *Indian* mode of warfare will be perfectly understood by all the Doctor's friends, who have heard that he boasts of having descended from the celebrated *Pocahontas*.

Arminian ground—show that God hates his own children, and will torment them eternally, agreeably to his primeval decree before they were created, &c. &c., and your work is done. Universalism will go down “to the tomb of the Capulets.” We shall all hide our heads in shame and confusion, and no more open our mouths or move our pens in defence of so pernicious an error. Nay, more, we shall even join your church, give you the right hand of fellowship, and our cordial support till the day of our death; and at last, crave a dying blessing on the head of so distinguished a benefactor as yourself, and depart, blessing God for the heart-cheering consolations of the doctrine of never-ending misery!

With all due respect, I am, dear Sir,

Your obedient servant.

*Utica, January 23, 1830.*

P. S. Should you discover any thing in the *addenda* to the “Bible creed” worthy of particular notice, I beg you will not let that divert your attention from the main subject, viz. the creed itself. After you have fairly disposed of the creed, you are at liberty to make what use you please of the *addenda*.

## LETTER II.

*The subject continued—Examination of Matt. xxv : 46, and its parallels.*

DEAR SIR—I am happy to hear that you still continue your lectures, in your church, on Sunday evenings, against the doctrine of Universalism ; and that having got through with repeating the lectures here that you delivered in Auburn, on the same subject, you have concluded to advance another step—having said all you proposed to say on the text in Matt. xxv : 46, you have now commenced on a text in the Apocalypse, concerning death and hell being cast into the lake of fire, &c. I am perfectly agreed with you in the opinion that your lectures will be the means, under God, of doing much good in this place. They have already called the attention of many to the subject, who had before scarcely ever thought of it, and produced a spirit of inquiry and investigation of the subject, which, if continued, cannot but result favorably to the cause of truth. All that is necessary, is to have the people inquire and examine with candor for themselves. Let this be done, and I have no fears as to the result. It has already had the salutary effect to convince several of your hearers of the truth of the doctrine you so bitterly and disingenuously oppose and misrepresent.

I very much regret, Sir, that you neglected complying with the reasonable request I made in my letter to you of the 23d ult., and declined reading the "Bible creed" to your congregation. Of this I should have had little reason to complain, had you read even as much as the *addenda*. But I have concluded that the only reason why you did not read them to your congregation, was, that the first was very far from expressing your sentiments—and you knew not how to refute it—and to read the second, would have been quite too humiliating for your *carnal heart* to submit to.

However, as I am never weary of well doing, although you have failed of profiting by the advice I gave you before, I am still inclined to exert my feeble faculties to do you



all the good in my power : and I have some further advice to give you on the important subject of your present labors.

You will recollect that the course you pursued in your lectures on the parable of the sheep and goats, was, to consider it a *literal* representation of a very momentous event *yet future*, in another world, *and another state of being*. This you did without even an *attempt to prove* that such was the true application of the text. You even told your hearers, in amount, on the evening that I heard you, that this application was so clear and self-evident that it needed no proof to make it more so. Now, although your penetrating vision might be so clear as to discover this point *intuitively*, without any arguments in its favor, yet many of your hearers were so stupidly ignorant as to *want proof* of its truth. And what rendered them so incredulous, as to the truth of this assertion, was the fact, that the text with its context would immediately associate itself, in their minds, with several other *parallel texts* that were particularly explained by our Saviour to relate wholly to events of *that generation in which he spoke*. You will recollect the parable of the sheep and goats commences, (Matt. xxv : 31,) thus : " When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all his holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory : and before him shall be gathered *all nations*," &c. Many, if not all, of your hearers believed this to be the same *coming of the Son of man*, mentioned Matt. xvi : 27, 28. " For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father, with his angels ; and then he shall reward *every man* according to his works. Verily I say unto you, *there be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom*." And Mark viii : 38, ix : 1, " Whosoever, therefore, shall be ashamed of me and my words, in this adulterous generation, of him also shall the *Son of man* be ashamed, *when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels*. And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, that there be *some of them that stand here which shall not taste of death, till they see the kingdom of God come with power*." And Luke ix : 26, 27. " For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the *Son of man* be ashamed, *when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father's, and of the holy angels*.

But I tell you of a truth, *there be some standing here which shall not taste of death till they see the kingdom of God.*" Many of your hearers, too, discover an intimate connexion between the whole of the 24th and 25th chapters of Matthew, and as the Saviour spoke in both, of his "coming with power and great glory," &c., enumerating in the 24th, the signs that should precede his coming, after which he adds, verse 34, "Verily I say unto you, *this generation shall not pass, till ALL THESE THINGS be fulfilled;*" (see also Luke xxi: 32;) people of common intellect cannot discover what the Saviour did mean, unless he *meant as he said*. They consider that he *did* "come with power and great glory" in judgment upon *that generation*—that "his angels," or messengers, included both the angels (messengers) of mercy, viz: the preachers of the Gospel, and the angels (messengers) of vengeance, viz: the Roman armies; and that believers and unbelievers, obedient and disobedient, disciples and apostates, friends and enemies, of the Saviour, were dealt with according to their characters and deserts; either in being delivered from, or suffering the impending calamities that then hung over the land of Judea;—that the separation did take place, and still continues—the gulf is "fixed," and will remain "till the fulness of the Gentiles be come in," when "all Israel shall be saved;" that the nation of unbelieving Jews were dispersed, scattered abroad, went "away into everlasting punishment," or correction, "prepared for the adversary and his messengers," while the obedient and faithful disciples were received into the "*aionian life*" of the Gospel—for "this is life eternal that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent."

Now, Sir, the request I have to make of you, is, that you will undeceive your *common sense* sort of hearers, by going over the ground again, and showing them, by proof "strong as Holy Writ," that Jesus meant no such thing as they understand him to mean. Show that the expression, "*this generation*" means *some thousands of years hence*, and in *another state of being*. Show them that the expression, "*Son of man coming in his kingdom,*" means *mankind going into another world*. Show them that the Greek word, *kolasin*, rendered *punishment* in the text, verse 46, which according to lexicographers, means a pruning of

excrescences, a lopping off of redundancies, or correction or chastisement for the good of the punished, means in reality no such thing; but that on the contrary, it means, tormenting mankind in hell to all eternity—placing them in a condition where they can *never* be corrected—can never be chastised for their profit that they may become partakers of holiness. Show that because God *hates sin*, he will therefore *perpetuate it to all eternity*—because he wants men to become *holy*, he will therefore place them in a condition that will forever preclude the possibility of their becoming so!

After you have gotten through with this task, and convinced your hearers that you are favored with supernatural visions of the infernal regions, know their exact latitude and longitude, and all the apparatus employed there to inflict torture upon the offspring of the Deity, and exactly who are to suffer

“Eternal plagues, and heavy chains,  
Tormenting racks and fiery coals,  
And darts t’ inflict immortal pains,  
Dipt in the blood of damned souls;”

after you have done all this, then you may with propriety proceed to the subject now in your hands, concerning death and hell being cast into the lake of fire, &c. And here you will have an ample field in which to display your extraordinary talents. You may show that the casting of death and hell into the lake of fire does not signify their destruction; but that the fire will prove a sort of preservative, to *cure* them properly, so that they can be kept on hand to all eternity, to serve as a sort of pastime for saints in heaven, while viewing the torments of their miserable subjects below. In order to do this, however, effectually, you will have to prove that God was mistaken when he said, (Hosea xiii: 14,) “I will ransom them from the power of hell,” (the same word rendered hell in Revelation) “I will redeem them from death: O, death, I will be thy plagues; O, hell, I will be thy destruction,” &c. You will also have to show that St. Paul was very wide from the truth when he said, “Death, the last enemy shall be destroyed,” &c. However, I presume you will get along with these difficulties well enough—they will be but mere straws in your way. And then, too, the dexterity with



which you can show that a *finite* creature can commit an *infinite act*, or that a *finite* act of a *finite creature* can merit or deserve an *infinite penalty*—that streams can rise higher than their fountains—that effects can be far greater than their causes, &c., will make it all fair weather.

When you have succeeded in accomplishing all this, I presume your people, at least the members of your church, will believe, (without your *telling* them of it,) that all your labors have been performed solely from feelings of *disinterested benevolence*, and your *love of souls*, without any regard to securing yourself a good living, or even the most distant thought of any such thing as “filthy lucre.”

Yours, &c.

Utica, February 13, 1830.

### LETTER III.

*Slandorous charges against Universalism refuted—Its licentious tendency, its infidelity, its want of sanctions, hypocrisy, character of females, &c. &c.*

DEAR SIR—I was present at your meeting last Sunday evening, and heard the philippic which you then and there delivered against the doctrine of universal salvation, a doctrine which I solemnly believe to be the everlasting and immutable truth of God and his word. And considering the course you pursued, and the shocking language you used on that occasion, I deem it an imperious duty incumbent on me to address you this letter, sincerely hoping and praying that you may receive some benefit from it, if indeed you are susceptible of being benefitted by any human instrument.

I intreat you, Sir, to pause, and seriously “ponder the paths of your feet” and the words of your mouth, while I pass in review some of the most prominent features of your last Sunday evening’s harangue, (for I do not consider it entitled to the name of a sermon.)

In your commencement, and as the foundation of what followed, you stated this proposition, (I shall not pretend to give your language verbatim, though I shall fairly state your meaning,) viz: "That in exact proportion as men disbelieved in future rewards and punishments, moral restraints were weakened and the bands of vice and iniquity were strengthened." By *future punishment* you here meant *endless damnation*, as the whole tenor of your subsequent remarks clearly showed. For you were opposing the doctrine of the salvation of all men; and you knew that many of this faith believed in future limited punishment. You therefore evidently meant that in exact proportion as the doctrine of *endless misery* was rejected and disbelieved, vice and immorality would prevail. You then stated that common observation of the character and conduct of men proved the proposition true—that wherever men rejected this doctrine and "mocked at hell," they were unprincipled and abandoned wretches—intimating that this was the case with all Universalists. Now, Sir, permit me to tell you—though you cannot be ignorant of the fact—that Universalists believe in all the hell that the Bible teaches—they do not "mock" at the hell of which the Scriptures give an account. If they mock at any hell, it is the one which modern Orthodoxy has built; and it is on the same principle that Elijah "mocked" at the absurd notions and idolatrous rites of Baal's false prophets. 1 Kings xviii: 27. We do verily believe in a hell that is not to be mocked at, and that many people actually go there, as David did when he sinned: nay more, that the pains of hell even get hold of them. David says "the pains of hell gat hold of me:" and again, "thou hast delivered my soul from the lowest hell." Will you point out a *lower* than the *lowest*?

You next proceeded to state that all nations and states, all legislators, philosophers and moralists, had acknowledged the necessity of some sanctions or penalties to laws. This is correct, and Universalists are among the very first to admit and maintain the maxim. But they are not willing to admit sanctions or penalties that would *defeat* the *very object* for which they were designed; as would obviously be the case with *endless* penalties. You then endeavored to show that the Heathens had their hell, called

*tartarus*, which answered exactly to the one in which you believed, a hell in which all infidels and wicked people would suffer to all eternity. But, Sir, what does this prove, excepting that your doctrine of hell partakes more of *Heathenism* than of *Christianity*? But, Sir, it is a libel even on the Heathen to accuse them of holding to so tremendous a hell as you do. If you will consult Brucker's "*Historica Critica Philosophæ*," by William Enfield, L. L. D., you will find the wisest and most learned even of the Heathen themselves, were more reasonable than to admit that these torments in hell, or *tartarus*, would be endless.

You stated, that as far as your knowledge extended, those who disbelieved in future punishment (meaning all who do not believe in endless damnation) were the most abandoned characters in creation—that it was these (i. e. Universalists) that constituted the greatest part of all those who fell under criminal proscription, convicts in State's prisons and penitentiaries, the inmates of alms-houses and houses of correction, criminals of every degree—that their crimes and abominations were, in nine cases out of ten, to be traced to this cause, viz. the doctrine you opposed; or in other words, to Universalism! Now, Sir, is it possible that you can have lived in Auburn for a number of years, where one of our State's prisons is located, and be ignorant of the fact, that when a thorough examination and search was made, five or six years ago, among the convicts in that prison, not a single individual could be found who believed in Universalism—not *one* who would avow his faith in the salvation of all men—while at the same time, multitudes were found there shut up, who were staunch believers and advocates of your favorite doctrine of endless damnation? and even several who had been *preachers* of it? Can you be ignorant of the fact that the search was made about the same time in the other State's prison in New-York, and of six hundred and twenty-three convicts there at that time, *not one* could be found who acknowledged himself a Universalist? Now, Sir, assertion is not argument; and *facts* speak much louder than words. How comes it to pass, if Universalism be the cause of all the crimes committed in the land, that so many Calvinists have got into State's prisons, and but very few, if *any*, Universalists can be found there? But per-



haps you will explain this mystery, by saying, "the righteous have to suffer a great deal more than the wicked do, in this world, therefore the poor persecuted righteous Calvinists have had to be shut up in State's prisons, while the wicked Universalists are allowed to go unpunished. But the scenes will be reversed in the next world."

Again, you charge Universalists with levity—say they treat the subject of religion lightly, ridicule their opponents, call them Pharisees, hypocrites, &c. In reply to this charge, I am bold to affirm, that no real or consistent Universalist ever treats the subject of *religion* lightly—it is too serious and important a subject to be thus treated by us. And I hope to convince you that I am *serious* in this letter, before I get through. There are, however, certain opinions, absurdities and follies of *men*, from which they will neither be persuaded nor reasoned, that are in themselves really ridiculous, and deserve to be treated as such; an example and divine authority for which we have in the case of Elijah's ridiculing the absurdities of Baal's false prophets, as above mentioned: and when men are really Pharisees and hypocrites, is it wrong to imitate the example of Jesus, and give them their proper names? I seriously wish, Dr. Lansing, that I could be convinced you did not deserve either of these names.

True, you acknowledged that Universalists were many of them possessed of bright genius, quick to perceive, and ready in wit and argument. But they gave themselves up to the uncontrolled sway of their passions; and the strength of their passions made them reason wrong. In order to gratify all their corrupt passions, they persuaded themselves that there was no hell, (I have before shown this charge to be entirely false.) And after you had charged upon Universalism nine-tenths of all the crimes committed by mankind, you said, "But their hearts are not naturally any worse than ours—*our* hearts, brethren, are *naturally as bad theirs*." Well, Sir, I shall not dispute you in this last particular, for there were doubtless many in your congregation, who thought this as true a sentence as you uttered, and they had "demonstration strong," that evening, of its truth.

You next proceeded to show the dreadful consequences of disbelieving in your favorite dogma of endless damna-

tion ; and directed the attention of your hearers to the wickedness of those Heathen nations where the belief of this had never prevailed, (notwithstanding you had before stated it to be the belief of nearly all the Heathen world,) and to complete the picture, pointed them to "infidel France," saying, "here we behold an appalling beacon to warn us of the danger ; a beacon fed with the oil of human blood ! Behold infidel France, scathed with the desolating blast, the blighting curse of the Almighty, for her crimes ; and the streets of Paris drenched with human blood—see on her posts, her pillars, and at the entrance of her grave-yards, this chilling motto, in staring capitals, **DEATH IS AN ETERNAL SLEEP !**"

But, Sir, let me ask, what was the *cause* of this desolating blast, this blighting curse, with which infidel France was scathed ? or rather let me ask, what was the *cause of her infidelity and carnage* ? Was it Universalism ? No, Sir, it was the *want* of it. It was the absurdities in theory, and the abominations in practice, the monstrous oppression and tyranny of the clergy of France, of the *believers* and *preachers* of *never-ending wo* in the future world, that *drove* the people to the *opposite extreme* of infidelity, and France to the dreadful extremity which you named. Let the mild and peaceful religion of Jesus, the doctrine of impartial grace, which teaches that God is the universal Father, and Friend, and Saviour of all men—the doctrine of equal rights and privileges to all—that all are equally dear in the sight of Heaven—let this doctrine have been generally inculcated and exemplified in France, and that fair country would never have experienced that "desolating blast" that followed the inculcation of infinite partiality, cruelty and wo.

Again ; as if it were not enough for you falsely to insinuate that the cause of all these calamities is to be traced to the want of faith in endless misery, you proceeded to demand, "if atheism, or the belief in annihilation, produced such awful crimes and calamities, what effects would this doctrine which I am now opposing, (*viz.* universal salvation,) produce, were it to become generally prevalent ? Its effects would be ten-fold more dreadful, even than atheism !" Try it, Dr. Lansing ; try this doctrine, as long as the doctrine of endless misery has been tried ; let it

have a fair experiment; and if its effects are one-half as bad as the effects of that doctrine, you shall never be asked to try it again. What has not the doctrine of endless misery done to destroy peace and happiness in the world? It has planted the standard of persecution wherever it has prevailed. It was *this* that put to death a John Huss, and Jerome of Prague. It was *this*, Sir, that kindled the fire of Geneva, and heaped the green withes around Servetus. It was *this* that established that infernal master-piece of hell, the Spanish Inquisition. It was *this* that kindled the fire of Smithfield. But why do I mention names? It was *this* that tortured, in the most cruel manner, and put to death more than fifty millions of Protestants in Europe—that drove our puritanic fathers across the Atlantic—and that, carrying its own deadly bane with it, hung innocent Quakers and banished honest Baptists in America. And, Sir, it is *this* that is now seeking to overthrow the free institutions of our happy land, unite Church and State, establish an American Inquisition, and restore the lost power to its abettors to burn and murder heretics for the glory of God and the good of souls!

But as if you had not yet made yourself appear sufficiently ridiculous in venting your malicious spleen against the most benevolent doctrine ever taught in the world, a doctrine at the annunciation of which, angels shouted “glory to God in the highest, and on earth, peace and good will towards men”—you proceeded to say, that, if you were to relinquish your present views, (*viz.* the doctrine of endless misery,) you would rather go down to the dark and miserable sewer of the atheist, than to adopt these views which you were opposing, *viz.* the doctrine of universal salvation!! Oh, horrible indeed! This was as much as to say, that if you could not hereafter be privileged with beholding the infinite and endless miseries of the damned in hell, or as the hymn you read, stated, “see devils plunge them down to hell, in infinite despair,” you did not wish to exist! that you had rather be struck out of being, into blank annihilation, than to be so tormented and mortified, as to see every son and daughter of Adam made penitent, humble, holy and happy, as Universalists teach! Alas! Sir, what are we to think of the mind that conceived, and the heart that dictated this sentence? I leave you and my readers to judge.



I shall now pass to consider what you said in relation to the obligations of oaths, or their ties upon conscience, and in relation to English laws, or the opinions of English jurists upon this subject. Your statements were intended to convey the idea, that all eminent legislators, jurists and civilians, especially those of England, had laid it down as an axiom, that unless your doctrine of endless misery in another world, were believed, there could be no tie upon the conscience—no witness could be allowed to give his testimony under oath, in a civil court. Perhaps, Sir, you wish to have this country under the jurisdiction of English laws. If it should be, you might possibly be deprived of your living, unless your conscience were pliable enough to subscribe to the thirty-nine articles of the Church of England, (of which latter circumstance, however, I have very little reason to doubt.) But I must here beg leave to tell you, that the above statement betrayed a palpable ignorance of the laws of England, and the opinions of her most eminent civilians, as well as the opinions of the most distinguished American jurists.

The English law of evidence at one period, required witnesses to be sworn on the Holy Evangelists or Christian Scriptures; and Lord Coke certainly laid down the rule to be, that an infidel could not be a witness—Coke Litt. 6 p. From this opinion, Lord Hale, and the Judges of a later period differed and pointed out its unsoundness. The subject, however, received the fullest illustration in the argument and decision in the great case of *Omichund vs. Barker*. That cause was heard so late as the year 1744. Lord Chancellor Hardwicke was desirous to have the question of evidence solemnly settled, and obtained the assistance of Lord Chief Justice Lee, Lord Chief Justice Willes, of the Common Pleas, and Lord Chief Baron Parker. It was argued before that tribunal, by Sir Dudley Rider, and Mr. Murray, (both subsequently Chief Justices,) and by other eminent counsel. The Judges and the Chancellor, took time to consider, and delivered their opinions *seriatim*. The judgment of the Court, was, that Gentoos sworn according to their religious ceremonies, were competent witnesses, though they were not Christians, and acknowledged none of its peculiar doctrines. That case is best and most fully reported in 1 Atk. 21. It is also

reported in Willes, 538. The latter is short and only valuable as giving Lord Chief Justice Willes' opinion more fully and accurately than it is reported in Atkins. These Judges examined with great learning the opinion of Lord Coke, and refuted it triumphantly. It is unnecessary to follow the whole course of their arguments, but I think it proper to refer to particular passages of some of their opinions, as illustrating the question now before us. The Lord Chancellor in his judgment, states, (p. 38, 1 Atk.) that his object was to be certain *whether these people (Gentoos) believed in the being of a God, and his providence?* Being satisfied of that, he admitted them to be competent witnesses. He also states that Bishop Sanderson laid down the proper rule, *juris juramentum est affirmatio religiosa*. And all that was necessary to an oath, is an appeal to the Supreme Being, as thinking him the avenger of falsehood, and the rewarder of truth. This, Lord Hardwicke adds, is not contradicted by a single writer, known to him, but Lord Coke. In the report of Lord Chief Justice Willes' judgment, as stated in his own notes, there are some particulars which it is proper to notice. He refutes the narrow notion of Lord Coke, that an infidel, or person who did not believe in the Christian religion, could not be received as a witness, and states, that (even according to Lord Coke) *Juramen tum nihil aliud est quam Deum in testem vacare*; and therefore, nothing but a belief of a God, and that he will reward and punish us according to our deserts, is necessary to qualify a man to take an oath. In p. 549, he says that such infidels, (if any such there be,) who do not believe in a God, or if they do, do not think he will punish them *in this world, or the next*, cannot be witnesses, because an oath cannot be any tie or obligation on them.

Notwithstanding this great decision, the question has since been made at different times. Starkie, in his excellent treatise on evidence, lays it down, that before a witness is sworn, he may be asked whether he believes in the existence of a God, in the obligation of an oath, and *in a future state of rewards and punishments*; and if he does not, he cannot be admitted to give evidence; for which he cites Peake's N. Pr. Reports 11. He does not, however, distinguish whether the state of *future* rewards and

punishments, is to be in this world or the next, or in both. We have seen that Chief Justice Willes expressly states his opinion to be, that a person who believes in a God, and rewards and punishments *in this life*, is a competent witness. And Lord Chancellor Hardwicke expressly says, (p. 43, of Atk.,) "My intention was to be certified whether these people believed in God and his providence." And lower down he agrees with Bishop Sanderson, "that all that is necessary to an oath, is an appeal to the Supreme Being, as the rewarder of truth and avenger of falsehood."

In 2d Cowen's Reports, New-York, on this question, in the case of Butts vs. Swartout, Cowen, 431, it was decided, that one who believes in the existence of a God, is a competent witness. The marginal note goes further. But the opinions expressed by a person offered as a witness, sworn to by another witness, were, "that he believed in the Deity, and in the doctrine of universal salvation." He was admitted to be sworn. In one case before the Circuit Court, the People, vs. Matteson, Judge Walworth delivered the judgment of the court. It is decided that the belief of rewards and punishments *in this life*, is sufficient to admit a witness to be sworn. In a clear view of the subject, the Judge shews that the elementary writers have all been misled by Atkins, who in his report of Omichund vs. Barker, ascribes to Chief Justice Willes, an opinion which he did not entertain, as appears by his own report of what his real opinion was. This error arose from the confidence reposed in the accuracy of Atkins, whose error was never corrected until the publication of Willes' Reports, thirty years after. He also cites a case from 15th Mass. Rep. 184, wherein it was decided that the infidelity of a witness, *as to a future state of existence*, goes to his credibility, and not to his competency. In short, that wherever you have a tie on the conscience, the witness is admissible.

In a note in 2d Cowen, pp. 572, 3, 4, Judge Williams delivers a clear opinion, "that it is not necessary, in order to render a man a competent witness, that he should believe any thing more than that there is a Supreme Being, and that he will reward and punish, *either in this or in another life*."

But, Sir, notwithstanding these clear decisions, and irrefutable arguments against the correctness of your position,



by the most eminent jurists in England and this country, you still persevere in your unhallowed efforts to stigmatize, brand with infamy, deprive of their civil rights, and disfranchise a respectable portion of your fellow-citizens. By the principles which you attempted to establish, thousands and tens of thousands of our fellow-citizens would be subjected to outlawry—and justice to their persons, rights and property, could never be done. The honest husbandman, mechanic, or merchant, could not be allowed to swear to his book accounts—the thief, the robber, and the murderer would escape the penalties of the law, if no witnesses could be procured but such as rejected your dogma of endless misery. The husband or the father might be bound by the ruffian libertine, and the chastity of his wife or daughter violated with impunity, in his sight—the arm of the civil law could not touch the villain, if no one beheld the deed but such as believed, with the apostle, that “God is the Saviour of all men,” and all the barriers of civil society would be broken down, and the cords of domestic peace and safety severed, by your exclusive, persecuting, and disfranchising principles! Pause, then, Dr. Lansing, I beseech you, and seriously and prayerfully consider the subject once more.

You were not however content to stop, after having gone thus far, and palmed upon your deluded hearers such dreadful principles as the above; but you then went on to stigmatize, slander, abuse and misrepresent Universalists still more—you stated that it was among people of their principles that nearly or quite all perjurers were to be found—that Universalists were prepared by their principles to perjure or forswear themselves—that they have nothing to fear, if they can only keep clear of the laws of the land, (intimating that they considered the laws which punished criminals, very *unjust* and cruel,)—that they do not believe God ever did or ever will take vengeance on the guilty—that therefore they do not and *cannot* feel the obligation of an oath; because an oath is an appeal to God as the avenger of crime and punisher of guilt—You then added, “if there are any Universalists here, I would advise you never to take an oath—at least not in the usual form—because every time you do take one in this form, you say your doctrine is a lie; you acknowledge it is false in that

very oath." Now Dr. Lansing, I believe that you not only meant to be uncharitable and slanderous in the above statements, but that you did certainly *know* they were not true—that you *meant to tell an absolute and downright falsehood*. I am aware that this statement will appear rather harsh and severe to you ; but a sense of duty to you, as well as myself, prompts me to make it. You cannot be *totally* ignorant of the sentiments of Universalists : or if you are, your *ignorance*, especially when you *pretend* to a knowledge of it, and undertake to expose and refute it, is almost as criminal as a wilful misrepresentation of it. But you are *not* ignorant of it—you know that all Universalists believe, or profess to believe, that *there is a God who JUDGETH IN THE EARTH*—that he is the avenger of crimes—that he will sooner or later inflict a condign punishment upon all wilful transgressors—that “ he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong that he hath done, and there is no respect of persons with God.” The question between the Universalists and their religious opponents, is not, whether *sinner will be punished*, but whether *God will torment them to all eternity, without designing them any good*. And you must have known this when you made the above gross misstatements. I cannot, therefore, view these statements in any other light than as wilful and absolute falsehoods, however solemn your visage and voice when you made them, or however great your protestations of a solemn sense of duty urging you on to that labor, and that you were “ doing it up for the great judgment day.”

Again ; as you stated that nearly all perjurers were to be found among Universalists, I wish you to inform me whether it was *Universalism* that influenced Arthur Tappan, the great pioneer of Calvinism in the city of New-York, to contradict himself so repeatedly, while under oath, at a late trial in that city ?

Again, Sir, have *you* not a salvo according to your system, against the punishment of perjurers, thieves, robbers, and murderers ? Will you not absolve them from all penalties if they will—*repent* (or *say* they repent) and *join your church* ? I do not say these things are so—I merely ask the question.

Another specimen of your “ charity,” in the “ faithful discharge of your duty” is found in the following decla-

ration. "But after all," said you, "there is one redeeming principle. Notwithstanding the pernicious and dreadful tendency of Universalism, there is one redeeming principle with those who embrace it. It is this—a *conviction of their own consciences that the doctrine is false—they cannot become so abandoned as fully to believe it—conscience tells them they lie, when they say they believe it.*" This, Sir, I shall pass without comment. I merely ask, if you consider *hypocrisy* the *only redeeming principle*?

You next said that wherever this doctrine (Universalism) was believed, all the domestic and social ties of life were dissolved and sundered—there was nothing that could bind the husband to the wife or the wife to the husband—the marriage vows and obligations were of no force—there was nothing to prevent the husband in a moment of passionate excitement or disgust, from totally abandoning the wife to wretchedness and ruin!! I beseech you, dear Sir, to look at this statement with the eye of dispassionate candor and soberness, and consider what is its natural import and bearing. Am I to understand by this, Sir, that *you* are not bound to *your wife* and family by any other tie than the fear of *endless damnation and infinite woe*? Am I to understand you that neither the love of God, nor the love of man—neither conjugal love nor parental affection—find a place in your bosom? that if it were not for the fear of an endless hell, you would abandon your wife to hopeless wretchedness and despair, and your children to destruction? If so, I say, "the good Lord deliver me," and my wife, and my friends, and all the females of this land, from a man of such principles!

Again, with mock solemnity and pretended love of souls, you appealed to the prejudices of your congregation, in an address to parents, saying, "Fathers and mothers, how do you feel, in relation to this subject? even you that profess to believe this doctrine—can you—*dare* you teach it to your children? Dare you throw away their souls, or commit them to such a dangerous bark as Universalism? If you are determined to die eternally yourselves, don't, I beseech you, don't kill your dear little children!" Just as if Universalists *knew* their doctrine was false, and that nothing but the *heavenly doctrine of endless damnation in hell* could possibly *save* them! "How do you live with your children



at home? Do you call them around the family altar and pray with them, and read God's word to them, and talk of the boundless love of God?" &c. But, Sir, how does the "boundless love of God" comport with your doctrine which teaches that God will torment the greatest part of his own offspring to all eternity, and that the *fear* of an *endless hell* is the foundation of all moral virtue? My intellect is so obtuse I cannot understand this. The boundless love of God and the doctrines of the Bible, are the principal things in which Universalist parents instruct their children.

But you asked, "Do we not know that by far the greatest proportion of Universalists *swear* instead of *praying*?" In answer to this question (however cantingly put) I will say, that Universalists as a denomination probably are not free from imperfection, and doubtless many individuals called by this name have their faults and vices, which is indeed a source of regret to every virtuous mind; but I do not believe there is *as much* profanity among Universalists—those who sincerely believe the doctrine—as there is among other denominations. For our principles are entirely at variance with this vice. It is the most inconsistent thing in the world for a Universalist to curse, swear, and damn his neighbor: because he does not believe his God will curse or damn any of his creatures to all eternity. But is it not perfectly consistent for Calvinists to curse and damn their fellow-beings? Is it not right for them to damn those they believe God will damn? As for praying, Universalists are not in the habit of *boasting*, either of the number or loudness of their prayers: but I may truly say, that they feel as deep and lively an interest in the welfare and happiness of their children as any people can feel, and as often bear them in their humble prayers and desires to the throne of God, which they know to be a throne of grace and mercy, and therefore they can pray in faith, "nothing doubting." Permit me now to ask, how *your* children are brought up and how *they* conduct in life? Whether any of *them* ever *swear* or conduct frowardly. I merely *ask* these questions, leaving *you* to answer them, if you will, according as the *truth may be*. If any of them *are* profane or immoral, I advise you by all means to teach them Calvinism no longer; but try Universalism,

and see if its influence is not more salutary than what they have hitherto been taught.

But, Sir, all the gall and bitterness of soul that flowed from you that evening—all the abuse and scandal which you heaped upon Universalists in general—must fall in the back ground, and be considered light and trifling, when compared with what I am now about to notice, which fell from your lips towards the close of your harangue—I allude to your shameful, cowardly and slanderous assault upon the *character of females* ! It was indeed to have been hoped, at least, that the female part of your audience would be allowed to escape the gall-envenomed shafts that were hurled so liberally at others. But no; even the most virtuous females in the world, if they chanced to differ in opinion from your orthodox majesty, could not escape; but must have their *characters* thus publicly and uncourtously assailed. You represented *all* females who fully believed in the doctrine of impartial and universal grace, as either abandoned characters, or very far from being respectable; telling your hearers they might depend on it, that, wherever a female was found who embraced this doctrine fully, there was some radical *defect* of moral *character*. You then added, (with what I considered a solemn mockery,) that you would as soon follow the lifeless corpse of a son to the grave, as to follow him to a wedding with a female of these principles! I think, Sir, very few females of these principles would covet a union with the son of such a father, if he partook in any measure of the spirit, disposition and manners of his sire. After admonishing all young men never to marry females of these principles, you then, in order to render your victory complete, advised all the female part of your audience never to marry Universalist husbands, if they valued the happiness of their lives or the safety of their souls. Oh, what subtlety and guile, what art and canting hypocrisy were here! By this manœuvre you doubtless thought either to frighten or shame all your female hearers either out of their reason or their independence, so far at least, that they would never dare attend a Universalist meeting, nor neglect your own; and thus securing *them*, you calculated their attractions would of course attach the young *men* to your congregation. But the artful guise was seen through. There were several

Universalist females present that evening—young ladies too, of the most spotless and virtuous character, and who are neither ashamed nor afraid to avow their belief in the doctrine of impartial grace. So far from being “led away captive” at your will, by your sneering and raillery, their cheeks were suffused with the glow of virtuous indignation at your barbarous and malicious assault upon their characters. And it is not very probable you will again have the opportunity of insulting them to their faces—at least not in your church.

Again, you thought perhaps to gain your end, in part, by saying, “it is well there are but few, but *very few females* who believe this doctrine,” (viz. Universalism.) But, Sir, did you suppose, because you had succeeded in frightening and leading astray so many women and girls by your arts and machinations, that therefore you might calculate on nearly *all* of them? If so, you will yet find out your sad mistake. There are many thousands of them in our land, and several scores of them even in this city, who are ornaments to their sex and their profession, who are not ashamed to own their belief that “Christ gave himself a ransom for all to be testified in due time,” and “shall see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied”—that he is, as the Bible declares him to be, “THE SAVIOUR OF THE WORLD,” instead of an elect few, out of the world. Of the most of these females—who have been freed from a slavish fear, delivered from the bondage of the gross superstitions under which your deluded followers are now groaning, and had the love of God and the hopes of the everlasting Gospel planted in their hearts, instead of those superstitious fears—of these it may be truly said, as it was of Dorcas of old, “these women are full of good works, and alms deeds which they do,” though their “good works” do not consist in attending meetings to hear their characters aspersed and in obeying the dictum of D. C. Lansing.

Before closing this long epistle I wish to ask you one question—As you prayed, last Sunday evening, *apparently with fervency*, for the salvation of all souls—that God would not come down in wrath upon sinners and cut them off in their sins, but that he would humble the proud, and subdue the stubborn souls, and bring them to repentance and faith, and finally sanctify and save them, I wish to ask you



whether, if God should hear and *answer* your prayers, and finally bring *all* to the enjoyment of that salvation for which you prayed, whether, under these circumstances, you would feel so bad as to wish to be struck out of being, and “go down to the dark and miserable sewer of the atheist”? Or, in other words, whether your prayer was the *sincere desire* of your *heart*, and the *prayer of faith*, or the solemn mockery of the hypocrite?

And now, Sir, praying that God may convince you of all your ungodly deeds, which you have ungodly committed, and of all your hard speeches which you have ungodly spoken against him and his children, and bring you to sincere repentance and reformation, I subscribe myself,

Yours, with all the respect due to such a man.

Utica, March 6, 1830.

#### LETTER IV.

*Discussion of Scripture testimony*—1 John iv: 1; 2 Tim. iv: 1-7; Mark ix: 43-47, xvi: 16; John iii: 36; Matt. v: 29, 30.

SIR—I feel myself again called upon to address you publicly on the subject of your late lectures on Universalism. Though I have fully discharged my duty to *you* in a former communication; and though I consider you beyond the reach of argument, determined *not* to exercise that reason with which God has endowed you, and your “heart” so “fully set in you to do evil,” that neither gentle persuasion nor severe rebuke will have any effect on *you* whatever; yet duty to my God, to my own conscience, to the cause in which I am engaged, and to an insulted and abused public, requires this labor at my hand; and you may rest assured, that when duty to these, requires it, I shall not be backward in obeying the call.

Should any part of this communication appear like yielding to Solomon’s proverbial exhortation, to “answer

a fool according to his folly," it will be, that you may not "be wise" in the conceit of your *followers*, rather than of your "*own* conceit." And should the *antithesis* of this proverb—"answer not a fool according to his folly"—be observed, it will surely be for this reason operating on my mind—"lest thou be like him."

I was present at your last Sunday evening's meeting, and heard what you stated to be the closing, or *last* of your *thirteen lectures on Universalism*. Your text was read in 1 John iv: 1. "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits, whether they are of God; for many false prophets are gone out into the world." This text, Sir, I believe was not only verified in the days of the apostle who penned it, but that we have both ocular and auricular demonstration of its truth and more full verification in the present day. After repeating your text, you turned to 2 Tim. iv, and read the first five, and seventh verses: "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, *blasphemers*, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce-breakers, *false accusers*, incontinent, *fierce*, *despisers of those that are good*, traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God, having a *form* of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away." [Here I involuntarily found my head "turned away" from the speaker.] "Ever learning, and never able to come at the *knowledge of the truth*."

After reading the above, you turned to your congregation and said, "Such a sentence, such a particular description as this, one would think, would close all controversy forever, in relation to the persons, or the class of persons, here intended by the apostle." And so thought I, Dr. Lansing. I thought, however, your hearers would have known better how to make the application, and what particular *sort* of people were intended by the apostle, had you read the 6th verse, (which by the bye stands directly between the 5th and 7th,) which reads thus: "*For of THIS sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive SILLY WOMEN*," &c. How appropriate! how particular! how exactly does this language describe certain characters in this age of the world! For you had just read over (previous

to commencing your sermon) the names of several *females*, whom you had thus "led away captive," as candidates for admission to your church the next Sabbath! Who can doubt the application of the apostle's words in this case?

This, Sir, may be considered as "answering a fool according to his folly." By it you can judge experimentally how it seems, to have such epithets and appellations as the above heaped upon one's self. Had I the least idea that you were honest, candid, and serious in your charges against Universalists, and that you did sincerely believe *one-half* that you stated about them, that evening, I should write in a different style. I would reason, and argue, and plead with you; yea, I would "entreat you as a father," to re-consider what you stated, to review the subject, and again look into that system against which you so liberally hurled your envenomed shafts of unmingled malice. But, Sir, I am fully persuaded there was no honesty nor candor in what you said: and certainly there was no gentleness, nor dignity, nor politeness in it. Not for your sake, therefore, but for the sake of my readers and the public, I shall notice, in a serious manner, some of your charges and imputations against Universalists.

You stated that "Universalists study the Bible, 'tis true; and many of them are very fluent in quoting the Scriptures: but then they study it merely to pervert its meaning, misrepresent its truths, and solely with a view to support their own particular doctrine. Neither the morality nor the religion of the Bible, will, or can benefit them under these circumstances. For they study the Bible in order to *explain away its meaning*." Now, Sir, can you, can any rational person, believe this is true of Universalists? What motive can we have for adopting such a course as this? Are we not as much interested in the truths contained in the Bible as any people in the world? We certainly can have no interest in error or falsehood. And if the doctrine of endless misery be taught in the Bible, we are as much interested to know it as any class of people can be. Were we running the race of popularity, and seeking the applause of men, we should certainly take a different course—we should follow on in the popular current with yourself, and lean on the prejudices, and fatten on the credulity of the people. But now we oppose the



popular dogmas of the day, and subject ourselves to the reproach and enmity of high-toned Pharisees and persecuting bigots : And can it be believed that in addition to this, we are voluntarily exposing ourselves to endless torments in the future world ? Impossible ! Were we disposed to be dishonest, we would certainly be dishonest in the *popular way* ; that if no motive with reference to an *hereafter* could influence us, we might at least have a *present* motive to lead us to such conduct.

You stated that "the grand design of God, in revealing his will, must have been to increase holiness among men : nothing, therefore, can appear in that revelation which is hostile to holiness. Hence, the doctrine under consideration (viz. Universalism) cannot be of God—cannot be taught in his revelation—for we have seen in these lectures, that it does not produce holiness, but the reverse." Here, Sir, your predicate is correct ; but your conclusion is false and unfounded. For in your lectures you have asserted, without proof, or the shadow of evidence, that Universalism is immoral, and licentious in its tendency. I might assume the same premises, and assert the same of Presbyterianism—that it was licentious, and therefore could not be of God—with as much propriety, and I think with more truth, than you do of Universalism. Can it be, Sir, if God designed to *increase holiness* among men by the revelation of his will, that he will place any of them in a condition where they must *eternally remain unholy* ? If he designed to *prevent* sin, will he fix any of his creatures in a state of *endless sin*, as your theory maintains that he will ?

You say of Universalism, that it makes all the threatenings of God perfect folly and nonsense. As examples of the expositions of Universalists, and their manner of explaining away the threatenings, you stated that they held the meaning of these words, (Mark xvi : 16 and John iii : 36,)—"he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned," "shall not see life," &c., to be this, viz. "He that believeth shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall go to heaven : " and the meaning of Matt. v : 29, 30, respecting "plucking out right eyes, and cutting off right hands," &c. to be this : "If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out and cast it from thee ;

for it is better to go to heaven with one eye, than to go to heaven with two good eyes!" "If thy right hand offend thee, cut it off; for it is better to be a good man and have one hand and one eye, than to be a bad man and have two hands and two eyes!" You then exclaimed, in view of these expositions which you imputed to Universalists, "O, what folly! what presumption! this is putting nonsense into the mouth of God Almighty!" Now, Dr. Lansing, you did certainly know better than this. In these statements, you did most maliciously, and wilfully pervert, misrepresent, and caricature Universalism; and you *knew* it, in the time of it. You knew no Universalist ever did thus believe, or thus preach, or thus write. You knew these imputations against Universalists were as false and as wicked as the heart that conceived them. And if any thing in the world could convince me of the truth of the doctrine of *total depravity*, certainly the wickedness and depravity you manifested that evening, while professedly in the service of God, would be set down as among the strongest evidences of its truth.

Suppose, Sir, I were to represent your views of the above texts, thus: "Dr. Lansing preaches that, he that believeth not shall inevitably be eternally damned—all mankind either are, or have once been, unbelievers: therefore Dr. Lansing preaches that all mankind will be eternally damned! O, what folly! what presumption!" Again: "Dr. Lansing preaches that no man can go to heaven, but certainly will go to an endless hell, unless he literally plucks out his right eye, and literally cuts off his right hand: not a single member of Dr. Lansing's church, nor a single Presbyterian in the United States, has ever done this: therefore all Presbyterians in this country, Dr. Lansing's church included, and himself with them, (for I perceive *you* have two hands and two eyes,) will certainly go to an endless hell." This, Sir, would be as fair a statement of your preaching, and I contend fairer, than you gave of the expositions of Universalists. For you gave no explanation of these texts at all, other than literal, but left your hearers to infer that you believed, unless a man literally plucked out an eye and cut off a hand, that he must go to hell.

I shall now state briefly my views of these texts, not on your account, but on account of my readers and the public,

Mark xvi : 16. "He that believeth not shall be damned," or condemned, (the original being the same for both words,) and John iii : 36, are explained by their parallel, John iii : 18. "He that believeth not IS CONDEMNED ALREADY, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." The believer "enters into rest," "hath the witness in himself," "hath eternal life," (for "this is life eternal, that they might know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he has sent,") and rejoices in the hope of immortality through Jesus Christ, being "saved" from doubt, darkness, fear and mental wretchedness.

But the unbeliever is damned, or "condemned already," "makes God a liar," (or treats him as such,) "because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son ; and *this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.*" In consequence of disbelieving this, the unbeliever is in doubt, darkness, and uncertainty, under condemnation. But he could not treat God as a liar, nor be condemned for *not* believing, if it were not a *fact* that eternal life was the gift of God, for him, through Jesus Christ. Therefore his condemnation will remain just as long, and no longer than he remains an unbeliever. Neither of these texts declare that any of the human family will eternally remain unbelievers ; nor does either of them mention or hint at the doctrine of endless misery. It is only on the ground that all men will finally become believers, that we maintain, agreeably to the general tenor of Scripture, that all will finally be saved.

The meaning of our Saviour's words, (Matt. v : 29, 30, and its parallel, Mark ix : 43-47,) "It is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell ;" was undoubtedly this : That it was better for those who heard him, to forego some of their present enjoyments, to relinquish some of their temporal interests, whether stations or offices of honor, emolument or profit, that they might hold under the civil or religious economy of the Jews, (even though they might be as dear to them as right eyes or right hands,) and thus "enter into life," or "the kingdom of heaven," or the Gospel dispensation, by becoming followers of him ; than it would be to retain those stations or advantages, and remain out of his kingdom, or the light of the Gospel, and



be subjected to the awful punishments and dreadful calamities that would shortly overwhelm that nation in ruin. The word here rendered *hell*, is in the original, *Gehenna*, literally *the valley of Hinnom*, situated a little to the south east from Jerusalem; a place as familiar to the Jews, as the Mohawk bridge is to the inhabitants of Utica. In this valley the Jews, in our Saviour's time, kept a fire constantly burning in which to consume the carcasses and offals of beasts, and the filth that was carried out of the city. This circumstance accounts for the phraseology in Mark, "where their worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched." This place had formerly been used for those abominable sacrifices, in which the idolatrous Jews had caused their children to pass through the fire to Moloch. A particular place in this valley was called *Tophet*; in Hebrew, the *fire stove*, in which some suppose they burned their children alive to the above idol. After the cessation of idolatry among the Jews, their Sanhedrin, or grand council, frequently inflicted punishment upon the worst of criminals, by burning them alive, *in hell, or the valley of Hinnom*. In reference to these dreadful scenes, that were associated with the name *Gehenna*, our Saviour undoubtedly uses the phrase *Gehenna*, (*hell*), and *e Gehenna tou puros*, (*the hell of fire*), figuratively, to represent the dreadful calamities and sufferings of the Jews, or the unbelieving part of Israel, when the measure of their iniquities should be full, and wrath should come upon them to the uttermost—when *Jerusalem itself* should be the *fire stove* or *Tophet* of *Gehenna*, the *furnace* in which God would gather that wicked people, (as brass, and tin, and iron, and lead are gathered in the midst of the furnace,) and blow upon them in the fire of his wrath, and melt them. (See Ezek. xxi: 31, 32, and xxii: 17-22.)

The disciples of Christ, by plucking out right eyes and cutting off right hands in the sense intended, or becoming followers of Jesus, receiving his instructions and obeying his admonitions, were enabled to escape with their lives, by fleeing from Jerusalem when they saw it compassed with armies; (as he had told them they should know thereby, that the desolation thereof was nigh;) but the unbelieving Jews were overwhelmed with calamities and destruction when the measure of their iniquities was full.

"For if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" Or if, as by a miracle, the disciples were enabled to escape with life to the city of Pella, when Jerusalem was destroyed, what fate must await those who heeded not the instructions of Jesus, not knowing when the desolation of their city would come, but continued to add sin to sin, every day of their lives?

Respecting the text, that speaks of destroying "both soul and body in hell," or casting into hell, "after he hath killed the body," which you repeated with so much apparent exultation, I observe, learned commentators differ widely respecting the import of the passage. As the word *soul* is susceptible of different constructions, (in many or most passages signifying animal life, as in Matt. xvi: 26,) some have supposed that the power Jesus warned his disciples to fear, was, the power of the executioners of the law, who had not only the power of taking life, but of taking it in the most shocking manner imaginable, even by *burning alive in hell*, or *Gehenna*, thus *destroying the life*, or soul, and *body* together; who also had the power of taking life in various other ways, and exposing the dead carcass, to rot above ground, to be devoured by worms, to be refused the right of burial, that it might be "an abhorring unto all flesh," (see Isa. lxvi: 24,) and thus disgrace their names and memories. See Dr. A. Clarke, on Matt. v: 22, and other places, relative to the different tribunals among the Jews, and the different degrees of punishment those tribunals could inflict. Others have supposed no other being could be meant but God. But allowing God to be the being mentioned, it by no means proves that he *will* destroy any of his children in hell, in another state of being; his having the power to do it, no more proves that he will do it, than it proves that he literally raised up seed to Abraham of the stones of the field, or that Christ commanded "twelve legions of angels" to come to his assistance when he fell into the hands of the Jewish High Priests and Elders, because they had *power* to do it. Much less does it prove the doctrine of endless misery; for the word *destroy*, literally signifies, to *annihilate*: and if the soul be annihilated, misery will of course cease. But you do not believe God ever did, or ever will annihilate a soul. This text, therefore, cannot be at all to your purpose. Whatever

be its true import, it says nothing about endless misery. We should always be careful to put no construction upon any doubtful passage of Scripture, that is manifestly against the *general tenor* of the Bible, the known perfections of the Deity, or the positive declarations of plain unequivocal texts ; such for instance as declare "God is love,"—He "is good unto all, and his tender mercies are over all his works"—"He loves all the things that are, and abhors nothing that he has made—he never would have made any thing to have hated it"—He "is the Saviour of all men,—will have all men to be saved and come unto the knowledge of the truth"—He is "without variableness or shadow of turning."

Sir, the most objectionable, indecent, and slanderous part of your last Sunday evening's harangue against Universalism, remains yet to be noticed. I shall pursue it no farther in this letter, but reserve the remainder till next week. In the mean time believe me, Sir,

Yours with as much respect as ever.

Utica, April 3, 1830.

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## LETTER V.

*More charges of inconsistency—Impeachment of Divine attributes—Cases of Noah and Antediluvians, Sodom, Gomorrah, Corah and his company, Judas, Infidels, &c. David's representation of the righteous and wicked.*

SIR—You observed, *secondly*, that "this system (Universalism) not only nullifies all the threatenings of God, but it impeaches all the dispensations of Providence, and accuses God of the most flagrant injustice. They maintain that all the judgment God ever inflicts, is in this world—and consists only in turning men into the hell of a guilty conscience—when the sinner transgresses, God gives him remorse of conscience in proportion to his guilt, or perhaps gives him a *praying wife*—this by some men is considered a sore calamity, a severe judgment, though



others would not consider it so—or a profligate son,” &c. “whereas, if they repent and reform they are delivered from all these evils—from the present hell which they suffer.”

Sir, the last part of the above charges against Universalists, was uttered with that sarcastic tone and malicious grin that indicated any thing but candor, honesty and sincerity in your heart. The expression relative to God’s punishing Universalists with “*praying wives*,” &c., was undoubtedly intended as a *bonne bouche* for the special gusto of some of your dear disciples. Be assured, Sir, that Universalists esteem it a *blessing*, instead of a *judgment*, to have *praying wives*, in the common and proper sense of that phrase—that is, if their wives pray as Paul directs, (1 Tim. ii: 1-4,) and pray in faith. On the other hand, we should esteem it a sore judgment, and a curse indeed, to have our wives pray as did Dr. Lansing, last Sunday morning, that “*God would hurl, headlong, from their seats in Congress*,” such men (you evidently meant) as the Hon. R. M. Johnson, or those opposed to a “religious party in politics,” and place in their stead such devoted Calvinists as would suit your orthodox majesty. We should esteem it not only an individual, but a *national curse*, to have many wives in this country pray thus, if there was any probability of their husbands’ being influenced to *act out the TREASON thus breathed forth in their prayers*.

In regard to the judgment of a *profligate son*, with which you think Universalists are sometimes visited, I inquire, Is it not somewhat unaccountable that *you*, neighbor Lansing, should be visited with this Universalist hell in the present world, and have the additional torment (unless it is a pleasure to you) of anticipating an endless hell for a profligate child in the future world?

Again, you stated that Universalists held that the wicked could not die till they repented—that as they must be punished in *this world* for all their crimes, they of course, on this supposition, could not die till they had repented, or been sufficiently punished for every sin. This, Sir, I mention principally for the purpose of showing the inconsistency of the charge with what you had previously urged against Universalists. You had before accused

Universalists of denying the necessity or advantage of repentance, and holding that all men might be saved without repentance—now you say the same denomination hold that all will, and must repent, even before they die. You had before accused us of denying all the threatenings of the Bible, and all just punishment for sin—now you say we hold, all must be punished for every sin, in this world. Which of these accusations, Sir, are we to consider as now laid up against us? for they certainly cannot both be true.

You seem to possess more than the eyes of an Argus—you discover inconsistencies where there are none, and opinions that never had a being. You say, “if all are punished in this world sufficiently, or repent before they die, according to the belief of Universalists, then they must go to heaven on the ground of their *own merit*; and hence they cannot sing glory to God, nor praise to his grace, for they are then *entitled* to heaven, on the score of merit. And even if they suffer a *future, limited* punishment, in *another* world, as many of that denomination hold, and after suffering the full demerit of their crimes, are saved, and admitted to heaven, it is because they are *entitled* to it, having suffered all that justice demanded of them; and hence, no thanks to God, nor to his grace, for their salvation.” What, Sir, let me ask, would you consider the grade of intellect possessed by the convicts in our State’s prison at Auburn, were you to hear them contending, after the term of their imprisonment had expired, “we have served our time out in the State’s prison—we have endured all the punishment our crimes have deserved, and, *therefore*, we are *entitled* to all the *honors* the State can confer, and to all the *public lands* and *wealth* belonging to this government—we have justly *merited* all these things, *because* we have been punished for our thefts, forgeries, rapes, burglaries,” &c.? And yet, Sir, this plea would be far more reasonable than your argument, that, if man suffers all the punishment his sins deserve, he is therefore entitled to heaven on the score of merit. You never heard a Universalist contend for the endless felicity of heaven, either for himself or any other one, except on the ground of its being a free, unmerited *gift of God*, not of works, lest any man should boast; though they all maintain that the wicked will be equitably punished, and the virtuous

suitably rewarded previous to their participation of this gift.

Next, in order to prove the impossibility of any thing like a just punishment for sin being inflicted in this world, you said, "look at the prevailing vices and customs of the world at the present day—see the drunkard in his cups, drinking, and sickening, and vomiting;—he experiences, to be sure, while thus sick and vomiting, considerable trouble and pain; but he soon feels a little better, and takes another good draught—he is then quite happy, and can talk eloquently of the goodness of God; and at such times I have heard the drunkard singing praises to the God of love"—[and I too have heard the drunkard at such times railing in the severest terms against the licentious tendency of Universalism, and speaking in terms of the highest praise of such men as yourself]—"thus *thirty thousand drunkards* in the United States, are, every year, drinking themselves into heaven, according to Universalism!" "Look too, at the accounts of crime in the Old Testament—the wicked inhabitants of Noah's time were taken away in their wickedness and carried right to heaven; while poor Noah was compelled to linger out a miserable life, suffering all bodily and outward calamities any one could, and far *more* in *his mind* than his wicked neighbors. The inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah, Corah and his wicked company, were all taken to heaven in a moment. Judas hung himself and anticipated his Master in entering into glory. Look at the millions of murders from Abel down to the present time,—the rivers of blood that have been shed by infidel cruelty and Papal persecution—one set of assassins after another, crying out 'republicanism and liberty!' have made their way through rivers of blood and seas of carnage, to the light and glory of heaven!"

This strain, in which you indulged yourself for some time, was surely *satis eloquentiæ, sapientiæ parum*; but every reflecting mind would at once pronounce it *rudes indigestiqua moles*, so far as *argument* was concerned; and be likely to say, *ruit mole sua*. Take, Sir, a dispassionate survey of all those scenes of blood, carnage and murder, and say whether most of them were not perpetrated by the believers in the very doctrine you so strenuously advocate—by believers in the doctrine of *endless*



*misery?* and, Sir, did not Calvin, the very founder of your sect, set an example of murder, in the death of Servetus, which his followers have been but too zealous to imitate? Charge upon Papal persecution as much blood as you please, and Protestant believers in endless hell torments have done the same thing. But did you ever know of a Universalist who murdered any one for his religion? No, never!

In relation to the thirty thousand drunkards that are annually "drinking themselves into heaven!" I pretend to but little knowledge; but conclude if that is the fact, the van of that numerous and motley band must be led by some eminent Calvinist preacher, as two or three of your own denomination in New-York, Albany, and other places, have lately gone off the stage in that kind of style; another lately broke his neck in a state of intoxication, in North Carolina, and two others have recently been excommunicated from the Ohio Presbytery for habitual intoxication. I will not be positive whether it was brandy or "lamp oil" that they drank.

In regard to the inhabitants of the old world, Sodom and Gomorrah, Corah and his company, Judas, &c., I do not know of any Universalist who believes they all went instantly, at death, to heaven; but if you are really concerned for fear they did—if you are very much disturbed at the idea that God changed their hearts in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, made them fit for heaven, by converting them from sin to holiness, put a stop to their wicked career, as he did to that of Saul of Tarsus even before his death, and took them directly to heaven—if you are afraid God did for them exactly what you *profess* to be so anxious to effect for other *similar* characters yet living—in short, if you are afraid God did not *confirm them in iniquity*, and place them in a state of *endless rebellion* against him; I advise you, in order to relieve your mind of such gloomy feelings, and put it into a profitable train of reflections, to read the articles upon those subjects published in Nos. 11, 15, 16, and 17, of the third volume of the Evangelical Magazine, and Nos. 11 and 15 of the current (first) volume of the Magazine and Advocate, which I shall enclose and send you with this letter.

There was, however, in the above named lofty flight of

your eloquence, one thrust which you made (though in a back-handed manner) at *republicanism*, which deserves a more serious notice. You divided the charges you made, of murder and carnage, between infidelity, papacy, and republicanism, intimating that the latter had no small share in effecting those dreadful evils. From the manner in which you expressed yourself, and from similar observations which have escaped your lips at other times, there is little reason to doubt that you would be glad to have the republican institutions of our own country overthrown, and in their stead the throne of a *political despot* erected in *concert* with an *ecclesiastical dynasty*, so that the people being thus "saddled," the king and the clergy, "ready boot-ed and spurred, could ride them legally by the grace of God," as Mr. Jefferson said. But thanks to an indulgent Providence, we are yet a free people; and I trust that, not until the names of Washington, Jefferson and Franklin are forgotten, and their spirits cease to hover around us, and not till some of the best blood in our country is spilt, will your dominant sect succeed in prostrating the liberties of this nation and erecting on their ruins the throne of a spiritual hierarchy.

I shall here notice another back-handed thrust, an ungenerous inuendo, which you made against Universalists, during your performance that evening. It was this: "How," said you, "shall we account for the sufferings of the apostles, when contrasted with the happiness and prosperity David represents the wicked as enjoying, unless we admit the doctrine of future (endless) punishment for the latter? The apostles suffered much in the cause of Christ—even *Universalists* admit this—that the apostles suffered—that *is*, those of them that pretend to believe the Bible; though two distinguished individuals among them, it is well known, have lately given up all belief in the Bible and a God, become avowed Atheists, and open followers of that pernicious and abandoned woman, who is spreading the poison of her Atheism through the country." The canting tone in which you uttered the last part of the above sentence was evidently designed to give your hearers the impression that Universalism naturally leads to Atheism. I am glad, however, that you mentioned the subject in this manner, because you give me a suitable opportunity of making a

remark, from which I hope you and the public may reap some benefit. The remark is this: The two individuals to whom you alluded, (for no one can be at a loss to know who they were,) were *both Calvinists*—brought up and educated thus, and became *members of Calvinistic churches*—before they professed to be Universalists: and not only so, the *very woman* to whom you allude, and her god-father, Mr. Owen, and the trio in her atheistical editorial and publishing establishment, were brought up and educated *Calvinists*, after the “straightest sect,” and went *directly, from Calvinism to Atheism*—never even professing to be Universalists. Sir, does Calvinism naturally lead to Atheism? The leaders of Atheism, in this country, went from Calvinism to their present system, and succeeded in drawing along with them two who were lately professed Universalists. But, Sir, we could very well spare them; for one is now in his dotage, having been of no use to us for a long time, and the other was never of much service, having doubtless had his brain shattered, or mind disordered, by the monstrosities of your creed, while he was a member of a Presbyterian church, from occasional symptoms of which derangement he has never since been free.

But to your argument. We grant the apostles suffered much outward calamity in their labors in the cause of Christ. They “both labored and suffered reproach, because they trusted in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, especially of those who believe.” 1 Tim. iv: 10. But then, they enjoyed a source of peace and happiness which the world did not generally enjoy. Christ said to them, “peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. In the world ye shall have tribulation; but in me ye shall have peace.” And so it was: hence, St. Paul says, “we which have believed do enter into rest.”

But how is it with the wicked? How was it with those wicked that David described, to whom you referred your hearers? Why, you pronounced them *blest* and *happy* in *this* world, far more so than the righteous—far more so than the apostles and other pious and godly people. And to prove it, you read almost the whole of Ps. lxxiii, and requested your hearers, when they went home, to read it



over again, and also Ps. xxxvii. After reading the above Scriptures of David, you observed, that "it would seem as if the question must be *forever settled*, whether Universalism were true, or not"—that "David had seen the prosperity of the wicked, in this world, whose eyes stood out with fatness and had murmured because of their happiness—until he was permitted to look into futurity—till he cast his prophetic vision to the eternal scene, the future judgment—and there saw the sword of divine wrath uplifted, and beheld the dread vengeance of the Almighty prepared to be poured out upon them with eternal fury!—and this prospect checked his murmuring and stilled his complaints against the dealings of Providence with men in this world." These were the ideas you expressed, though not in every respect your exact words.

But, Sir, what do those Psalms state about the *eternal world*? What information do they give us about a judgment, and endless misery, in another state of being? Just nothing at all. There is not a syllable said about a judgment or punishment in any state of being but the present;\* much less is there aught said about the doctrine of endless misery, which it was your business to prove by Scripture testimony. Had these Psalms even proved the doctrine of *future* punishment, they would have been nothing to your purpose, in opposing Universalism, unless they had proved that punishment to be *endless*. But let any person unbiassed by tradition or prejudice, read those Psalms throughout attentively, and he will not find a syllable to support your gloomy hypothesis. He will find that David, in Ps. xxxvii, exhorts to "trust in the Lord and do good," and not to repine at the temporary and outward prosperity of the wicked; for they would soon be visited with some severe judgment or sore calamities—that they would be taken in the very snares they set for the poor and needy—that their swords should return into their own hearts, and their bows should be broken—whereas the righteous should "*inherit the earth*"—the Lord should "uphold them with his hand"—they should not be "forsaken, nor their seed

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\* By this expression, the author of the letters would by no means wish to be understood as opposing the idea of a future disciplinary and limited punishment; but as indicating his conviction that the particular Scripture in question related only to this state of being.

be left to beg bread." Does this, Sir, look like your *eternal hell* and *heaven*?

In Ps. lxxiii, he treats of the same subject, with this difference only, that he mentions the foolish cogitations that occupied his mind, when looking only at the outward and momentary prosperity of the wicked, without taking into view what his observation and experience afterwards taught him must soon be their fate. These cogitations appear to have been the same as the present opinion of Dr. Lansing is, viz. that in this life, taken altogether, the wicked enjoy far more happiness than the righteous do. But recollect, the Psalmist afterward condemned this opinion as entirely false. He says, "so foolish was I and ignorant; I was as a beast before thee." And, Sir, do you still harbor a sentiment that the Psalmist pronounced *foolish*, *ignorant* and *beastly*? But why was the sentiment foolish and erroneous? Because, David had seen so many signal displays of God's righteous judgment against transgressors, had learned by the history of his own nation, the sudden overthrow with which the wicked had generally met, that the old world, Sodom, Gomorrah, Corah, &c., had been destroyed, that he was satisfied some calamity would soon visit those wicked people he had been fretting about. So certain was he of the fact, that he speaks of it as already accomplished: "How ARE they brought into desolation, as in a *moment*! they are utterly consumed with terrors." A man must certainly have a prolific and inventive imagination to conjure up an idea of endless damnation from such language.

Sir, I have protracted my remarks on the above topics to so great a length, I shall not be able to finish in this letter what I have to say to you on the subject of your performance the evening I last heard you. You may therefore expect to hear from me again soon. Should you become my enemy, because I tell you the truth, be assured I shall never be

Yours.

Utica, April 17, 1830.

## LETTER VI.

*Unequal distribution of rewards and punishments. If present misery is compatible with the goodness of God, why not endless? Two characters set forth in the Bible—Faith and repentance conditions of salvation—How can any one be redeemed from hell? Where shall the ungodly appear? Responsibility of ministers—Ezek. iii: 16-21; Mal. ii: 7, 8, 9.—Concluding admonition.*

SIR—I shall now proceed to examine the closing part of your harangue against Universalism, on the evening of the last Sunday in March.

After you had proceeded to such a length in abusing Universalists, and misrepresenting their sentiments and the sentiments of the sacred writers, one would naturally suppose you had emptied yourself entirely of the gall and wormwood of your soul, without “foaming out your own shame” any more, by impugning the dispensations of Providence, or attempting to

“Snatch from his hand the balance and the rod,  
Rejudge his justice, be the God of God.”

But it seems you had not quite “finished your course” in “this kind of thing,” though the closing part of your performance exhibited *in general* more modesty, and decency than your previous labors.

“Look,” said you, “to the many individual cases of crime, cognizable and not cognizable by law, thousands of which no human law can ever reach or punish, and which must of course go unpunished, at least, in this world”—(as much as to say, “*there is no God that JUDGETH IN THE EARTH.*”) And you wished to know how such crimes were or could be punished, unless there was an endless hell for their perpetrators, hereafter.

Sir, is it reasonable to conclude, because certain crimes are not cognizable by human laws, and because some sinners escape the *outward* punishment of these laws, that therefore these sins are without any penalty in this world, and that these sinners can suffer no punishment in time? Does not the thief, the robber, the murderer, and every vile



transgressor carry about constantly a hell within his own bosom that destroys all peace of mind—a canker that gnaws continually on the vitals of happiness—and is not the declaration verified in them, “*There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked*”? Will nothing be allowed to constitute punishment but an endless hell of fire and brimstone? And why did you not prove, by Scripture testimony, that such sinners would suffer endless punishment in hell? Answer—Because you could not prove it, either by revelation or reason.

You proceeded, “It may be urged that God does not feel as we do in relation to transgressors; but I ask, does he delight in revelry and crime?” I answer, no, he does not delight in revelry and crime as such, but manifests his righteous disapprobation of them, by so constituting the laws of his moral government, that “the wicked ARE like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt.”

Again: you ask, “If it is compatible with the goodness of God to inflict punishment for sin in this world, is it impossible for him to inflict punishment in another world? Is it not equally compatible with his goodness to inflict it hereafter?”

Here, Sir, was a degree of sophistry in this question incompatible with honesty—you did not state fairly the ground of difference between you and your opponents—neither did your words express the meaning you evidently had in proposing the question. For if you meant any thing in opposition to Universalism, you evidently meant that, if it is consistent with the benevolence of God to inflict temporal or limited punishment for sin, it is equally consistent with that benevolence to inflict eternal or unlimited punishment. This, I repeat, must have been your meaning, if you meant any thing in opposition to Universalism, I shall therefore proceed to answer this question by propounding another.

If it is compatible with the character of a good earthly father to inflict a reasonable punishment on a disobedient child, is it not equally compatible for him to kill his child outright? Or if it is consistent for a good earthly parent to chastise his child in proportion to his crimes, and for the purpose of subduing, amending, or bringing to obedience,

is it not equally consistent for him to scourge his child every day of his life, keep him shut up in a dreary dungeon, give him barely food enough to keep the breath of life in him, that he may endure torment, and thus set all his ingenuity to work to render his child as miserable as possible during his whole existence, without the least intention of doing him any good by this punishment? This question must be answered in the affirmative, to give any support to your cruel doctrine of endless misery.

"The Bible," said you, "represents, throughout, two distinct and different characters among men—the good and the bad, saints and sinners, sons of light and sons of darkness—to one or the other of these classes all men must belong, for Christ said, he that is not for me is against me." True, Sir, but do you find an *INFINITE difference* between any two individuals of the human family? The very best are not infinitely good, but all are subject to imperfections and faults; and the very worst are not infinitely evil, but all possess some good qualities. By what fair mode of reasoning, then, do you conclude an *infinite* difference will be made in their endless condition? Again, these different characters you mentioned, have been, and often are, both sustained by the same persons at different periods of their lives. Take for example the persecuting Saul of Tarsus—he was once the chief of sinners, a bad man, a son of darkness; but by the grace of God he became a saint, a good man, a son of light. Now, Sir, if the grace of God wrought such a change in this vile wretch, are you authorized to limit the arm of the Holy One of Israel, and say he cannot and will not effect an equally salutary change in all sinners?

"Again, the Bible says the qualifications for heaven are faith and repentance. If all shall finally repent and believe, I shall not be the last to rejoice in their salvation." Well, Sir, if the repentance, faith and salvation of all is desirable, and would be to you a subject of rejoicing, can you ever participate fulness of joy till this desirable event is accomplished? (though I shall leave you to reconcile this declaration with a former statement of yours, that you would "rather go down to the dark and miserable sewer of the Atheist—to blank annihilation—than to admit the views of Universalists.")

"But," said you, "to declare with the Universalists, that all shall be saved at all events, and then interpose the Bible conditions of faith and repentance, is most astonishingly and grossly absurd." And, Sir, is there not as much absurdity in declaring, with the Calvinists, that "God did, from all eternity, elect *some* to everlasting life"—their number being "so certain and definite that it could not be either increased or diminished," and these "shall be saved at all events," and then interposing the Bible conditions of faith and repentance? Is there more absurdity in supposing all men will be saved on these conditions than there is in supposing "the elect will be saved"? As an illustration of the views of Universalists, relative to the certain salvation of all, and the interposition of the conditions of faith and repentance, I will cite you to the case of Paul and the ship's crew with him on his way to Rome. You will recollect, that when they seemed to be beset with dangers on every hand, and the crew were almost in despair, Paul told them positively, "there shall be no loss of any man's life among you—there shall not a hair fall from the head of any of you." Yet, when some of the shipmen were about to flee out of the ship, he told them, "except these abide in the ship ye cannot be saved." Now, Paul was certain that none of the crew would perish, and equally certain that except these abode in the ship they could not be saved. What then is the inference? Why, that the condition of salvation would be complied with. So we maintain, that all men will be saved: and with equal confidence do we believe that all will finally be brought to yield to the conditions of repentance and faith.

Here you anticipated another difficulty. "How many," said you, "die in sin—drunkards, liars, robbers, pirates, murderers—first perhaps murdering and then committing suicide! How are they to be saved? Where and when will they repent? It will be too late when the day of retribution shall come—when they shall call on the rocks and mountains to fall on them and hide them from the wrath of their offended Judge—none can then repent—none can ever be redeemed from the flames of hell," &c.

Answer. This strain of declamation perhaps would pass for evidence or argument, with some traditionated and superficial orthodox people, who had never heard any



preaching but that like your own, and who had never allowed themselves to reflect or examine for themselves ; but it will not and cannot satisfy rational and enlightened minds of the correctness of your proposition. For, 1. It was assertion and declamation without argument or evidence. 2. There was an entire irrelevancy, to your subject, of the passage of Scripture referred to. The passage in Revelation relative to the rocks and mountains falling on those sinners mentioned, has no more relation to a future world, than the ancient predictions of the Babylonian captivity had : as any one will perceive by reading the context. And 3. Your declarations were opposed to particular passages and to the general tenor of Scripture.

As it respects those vile characters you named, if it is possible for God to bring such to repentance and save them in this world, is it not equally possible for him to do it in another ? Are they not equally subjects of his moral government, and under his control, there, as here ? then as now ? Is his arm there shortened that it cannot save ? or is *his* nature changed from benevolence to hatred by *their* removal from this to another state of being ? In respect to the time when, and place where, they will be brought to repentance and reconciliation, I am satisfied to leave this with God, and in the language of the Bible, believe " that in the DISPENSATION OF THE FULNESS OF TIMES, he will gather together (or rehead, restore) in one all things in Christ, whether things in heaven or things in earth"—that he " hath spoken of the TIMES OF THE RESTITUTION OF ALL THINGS, by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began"—that " all nations whom he has made shall come and worship before him, and shall glorify his name"—that " all the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the Lord, and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before him"—that " every knee shall bow and every tongue confess, that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father"—and " no man can say he is Lord but by the Holy Spirit"—that " as in Adam all die, even so IN CHRIST (not *out* of Christ) shall ALL be made alive," and " he that is in Christ is a new creature"—that whereas " it is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption : it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory : it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power : it is sown a natural body,

it is raised a spiritual body. As we have borne the image of the earthly, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly."

Your assertion that none ever were, or can be redeemed from hell, was equally false and anti-scriptural, with many other statements you made. David says, (Ps. lxxxvi: 13,) "I will praise thee, O Lord, with all my heart, and I will glorify thy name for evermore. For great is thy mercy towards me; and thou has delivered my soul from the lowest hell." Perhaps you will say David was delivered from going to hell, instead of being delivered from hell itself. But recollect, he says, (Ps. cxvi: 3,) "the pains of hell gat hold upon me:" so that David actually went to hell and was delivered from its pains. And Jonah says, (chap. ii:) "out of the belly of HELL, cried I, and thou heardest my voice—the earth with her bars was about me forever; yet hast thou brought up my life from corruption, O, Lord my God." Hence, we find that Jonah went to hell and suffered there *forever*, and yet, was afterwards delivered or redeemed from it. And, Sir, do we not read that "death and hell delivered up the dead that were in them"? How then can you assert that none can ever be delivered from hell?

About the last question you proposed that evening, worthy of notice, was this—"Where shall the sinners appear when Christ delivers up the kingdom to his Father?"

Answer. "Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father, when he shall have put down all rule, and all authority and power. For he must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet. Death, the LAST ENEMY, shall be destroyed. For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith, All things are put under him; it is manifest that he is excepted which did put all things under him." [Here observe, the Father is the only being excepted, that is not put under him—of course, all other beings must be subdued unto him in the same sense that any are.] "And when all things are subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that GOD MAY BE ALL IN ALL." Now, Sir, tell me where is your endless hell, and the sinners that are to inherit it? Is God in hell and its subjects, and they in him? He must be in hell and in the sinner, and they in him, if hell and the sinner still exist, and *God is all in all*.

In conclusion, you told your congregation, again and again, how *very conscientious* you were in "doing up this work," (of preaching against Universalism,) "for the great day of accounts, and doing it faithfully"—how ardently you desired to deliver souls from the awful hell that awaited them—[what a pity that *God* has not as much benevolence for souls as *you* have!]  
—how that the peculiar circumstances of the present time (the alarming prevalence of Universalism) had led you to do the work now—that you wanted to say a great deal more on the subject than you had said; but you apprehended some of your hearers began to grow somewhat weary of the subject, having continued this course of lectures now for thirteen weeks in succession—[There was more truth too, than poetry, in this hint.] But to justify your course in having said thus much, you read Ezek. iii: 16–21, as applicable to your case. But what has this passage (which relates to the commission of Ezekiel to the house of Israel) to do with a Calvinistic preacher in the present day? or what has it to do with the preaching of endless misery? Just nothing at all. Yet the exposition you gave of it, implied that you really supposed the blood of *immortal souls* would be required at your hands, if you did not thus preach against Universalism. Sir, does the passage say any thing about the *blood of immortal souls*? No. Does it say any thing about people being exposed to suffer endless misery? No. Suppose, through your neglect to warn your hearers of the dangerous tendency of Universalism, some one should die in this belief, and go to hell—would you have to go to hell also, as the penalty of your neglect? Yes, of course, if your exposition was correct. Then the neglect of *one* would be punished with the endless damnation of *two*, would it not? Again, suppose your neglect should cause the endless damnation of *twenty souls*—would you not (allowing your exposition correct) have to suffer *twenty eternities* of misery! or *twenty infinities of punishment*!

Though I believe the station of a real Gospel minister is a highly responsible station, and that every true minister of Christ does, and necessarily must feel himself responsible for the manner in which he discharges the duties of his calling, yet I do think, Dr. Lansing, that you advanced the most palpable absurdities in commenting on the



above passage from Ezekiel. And when a man so often repeats, and reiterates, times without number, declarations of his own *extraordinary honesty*, it can have no other tendency ultimately, but to cause reflecting people to think he is *no more honest than he should be*; as if a man should run through the streets telling every body he saw that he was *no thief*, and should repeat it from house to house, every day for a long time, that he *never stole any thing in his life*, it would naturally tend to fix suspicion, and induce people to keep their goods out of his reach.

I apprehend the following text would have been much more appropriate and suitable to your case than the one above mentioned:—"For the priests' lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth: for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts. But ye are departed out of the way; ye have caused many to stumble at the law; ye have CORRUPTED THE COVENANT OF LEVI, saith the Lord of hosts. Therefore have I also made you contemptible and base before all the people, according as ye have not kept my ways, but have been PARTIAL IN THE LAW."—Mal. ii: 7-9.

I have now done with your lecture on the evening I last heard you. In closing this letter I will offer a few words of advice. In your preaching, be more modest in your pretensions to superior authority and sanctity—more charitable towards those who may differ from you in opinion—less dogmatical in your assertions—less presumptuous in sentencing your neighbors to hell, who may possess as good or better hearts than yourself—more studious of preaching the simple, uncorrupted doctrines of the Bible, than of perverting particular texts and torturing them into an alleged support of your sectarian dogmas. In your intercourse in society, pretend to less, and practice more true religion—instead of creeping into houses for the purpose of terrifying weak-minded women and children with the fear that they are going directly to hell unless they join *your party*, visit the fatherless and widow for the purpose of affording needed relief or consolation. When I can see you practising according to this advice, I shall think you are in a hopeful way for conversion.

Yours as ever,

D. SKINNER.

Utica, May 1, 1830.

*Mr. O'Connell*

Mr Chamberlain





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